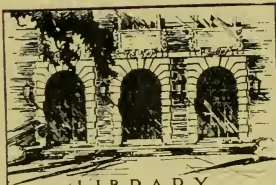




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Mary Anna Hamilton.
MRS. GREVILLE,

THE STORY OF A WOMAN'S LIFE.

TOLD BY

URSULA,

A SOMEWHAT SISTER OF MERCY.

“Ask what is human life?
A painful passage o'er a restless flood,
A vain pursuit of fugitive false good,
A scene of fancied bliss and heart-felt care.”

COWPER.

“Mon avis est qu'on ne peut créer des personnages que lorsque l'on a beaucoup étudié les hommes, comme on ne peut parler une langue qu'à la condition de l'avoir sérieusement apprise. Ainsi je me contente de raconter.”—DUMAS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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1874.

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MRS. GREVILLE

CHAPTER I.

“ At first so slight the altered guise,
It woke no fear, scarce raised surprise ;
But hour by hour, and day by day,
Something familiar died away ;
A smile, a sigh, a look the less,
A languor in the forced caress,
These nameless nothings that reveal
Tho’ tongues be mute, what hearts must feel.”

ERNEST JONES.

As may be imagined, Mr. Vandeleur soon made Eveline abandon her idea of quitting the world ; for he well knew that such an extreme step would bring no little censure on him—a censure that he had not the slightest intention of incurring. He persuaded her that she had exaggerated the alarm, and soothed her with all the sophistries of which he was master. So matters went on as

before, only that a great change came over her.

Her conversation with Pamela had awakened her from the dream in which she was living—had roused her to a fresh consciousness of the deceit which she was exercising towards the world, and of the vileness of accepting on false pretences the trustful affection of her friends. Hating herself for the duplicity which she was practising towards them, her manner assumed a hardness very foreign to her nature.

She no longer sought her best friends, Pamela and the duchess. Not that she loved them less, but each mark of confidence from them stung her to the quick, and her guilty conscience shrunk from the pain.

Lady Gaveston always thought that she had offended her by her plain speaking on a certain morning, and her warm heart was hurt ; for she had spoken out of the fulness of her affection for her friend. But there was another storm gathering. The cloud was no bigger than a man's hand at first, and Eveline would not see it, but attributed to a thousand other causes the gradual change that was coming over Vandeleur—the less frequent visits, the hurried moments he gave her, the

irritable way in which he would receive her loving attempts to detain him—all were accounted for by her in some way—any but the true one. She was too trustful—too loving to doubt him till all hope was gone. But this change in him affected her spirits more than she cared to own.

One day, towards the close of the season, they were sitting in her drawing-room, and she asked when he was going down to Wales.

“Well, not at all, I think,” he replied, indifferently; “the fishing is not worth keeping. I have given it up.”

“Given it up!” she exclaimed, her heart sinking at the careless tone. “Shall you not come down and see me?”

“I don’t think I can manage Wales this year, I have so many engagements; but we are sure to meet somewhere—Beaumanoir, Gaveston.”

“Never at Gaveston,” said Eveline, shaking her head.

“Well, if not there, somewhere else. I leave town to-morrow.”

“Shall I not see you again?” said Eveline, growing white. “Is this good-bye?”

“Yes; for a few weeks, at all events.”

She could not help it—she burst into tears.

He got up, annoyed as men always are at the sight of tears which they cause.

“Another scene!” said he, irritably.

“Forgive me,” said she, humbly, and driving back the tears; she pressed her hands on her heart to keep down its throbbing, and with a smile which she tried to make bright, added, “the thought of not seeing you for so long upset me; forgive me, dear.”

She would not see that she was less precious in his eyes than she had been but one short year ago—she would not remember that there had been a time when, had he seen her weep, he would have exclaimed with Lee:

“There’s not a tear that falls from those dear eyes,
But makes my heart weep blood”—

she would not see that almost roughly he wiped away her tears. And meekly grateful, she accepted the cold kiss, and strove to answer him with a smile; but when the last echo of his footfall died away on the pavement, she yielded to a wild agony of grief as the truth forced itself upon her—*the love for which she had bartered all, was slipping from her!*

Perhaps the recollection of her tears and sad smile as he parted from her, smote him; for in a day or two he wrote very tenderly to

her. The letter was kind as of yore, and once more she breathed ; for though she was fading in *his* eyes, *he* was a thousand times dearer than ever to her.

How unequal is the battle ! In proportion as a woman gives, so does she lose in a man's estimation. Oh ! my sisters ! if only you could believe this !

Eveline left town almost as soon as Vandeleur did, and going down to Llanfenydd, sought some solace in lingering in every place which they had visited together—in every spot that bore a trace of his presence. The dear old river, with its deep pools, dark as midnight—in which he had fished while she sketched—and over which, like two children, they had bent their heads to see each other's face mirrored therein—that dear old river ! how she loved it ! loved its merry, laughing ripples—its noisy torrent, quarrelling with the dark rocks as it bubbled, and foamed, and splashed away to sea. She would sit and listen to it in all its moods, dreaming that she could hear *his* voice mingling in the soft rush of waters, or in the gentle whisper of the silver-birch-trees as, bending beneath the evening zephyr, they softly waved their branches over the deep, midnight pools. But one year ago,

and how sweet a cadence had all these sounds kept to his words !

A year ago ? Ay, but *one* year back, and she was innocent and beloved.

Eveline buried her face in her knees, and groaned aloud.

Wearily dragged on the days. Health as well as spirits began to fail. Her extreme quiet and gentleness of manner were put down to the delicacy of her health, and, beloved as she was by her friends, every excuse was made for her listlessness.

Now and then came a letter, which brightened her for awhile. He had not quite forgotten her—and she was happy again. At last he wrote to say that he was coming home—was there any hope of seeing her in town ? he was wearying to see her dear face again.

She was in Scotland when that letter reached her, but what mattered that ? Would she not have gone to the world's end, if only to see him for a moment—to hear the sound of his voice ? Of course she rushed up to meet him, and then the daily correspondence went on as before—his letters beguiling her of her fears, and remorse, and her sufferings.

But one day he wrote, saying that “ he was not sure, but he feared that his wife was aware

of their constant correspondence, and it would be better that it should cease ; besides, his eyes were open to the harm he was doing her, and he could not but see that it was better for both that all relations between them should come to an end." *O si sic omnia !*

Eveline's fears and sorrow were all for him. No thought of self—only him. She would do anything—everything he wished—so that no harm should accrue to him. For his dear sake she could bear anything ; silence, separation—any sacrifice—to save him, if only he loved her still. Such was her answer : it met with no response, nor did she expect one ; but methinks, had she known that he was sighing at the feet of a charming little French marquise, who had captivated him, she would not have written that fond, loving epistle.

The weeks went by, and hearing neither of him nor from him, her anxiety and fears became so unendurable that she felt her suspense must be relieved, or she would go mad. Her famished heart was hungering for news which she dared not ask of their common friends. Her suspense growing unbearable, she resolved to call at his house, and thus learn something of him for whom her heart was breaking.

Closely veiled, she got into a cab and de-

sired to be put down in a street which she named ; and on getting out, she gave the man half-a-crown, which elicited the remark, "Vell, she's a lady, anyvays. I vonder vot she be arter." Twice did Eveline pass Vandeleur's door, ere she could summon courage to ring. The shutters were closed—evidently no one was there—but her heart failed her. However, at last she pulled the bell.

"Was Mrs. Vandeleur at home?" she asked, in much alarm lest that lady should be there.

"No, ma'am," said the porter, at once recognising a lady, beneath the plain dress and thick veil ; "the family is at Brighton."

"And the children?" said Eveline, who dared not mention *his* name.

"The young ladies are better, I believe, ma'am. Mr. Vandeleur had been ill, but is pretty well again. Will you leave a card ? it will be sent with the letters ?"

No, Eveline would not leave a card, but would be glad of the address.

"Shall I say who called ? I expect Mr. Vandeleur for a few hours to-morrow," said the porter, curious to learn who this closely veiled lady could be.

"No, thank you, I will write," said Eveline, and she walked away, sick at heart.

“ Ill? he had been ill and she not to know it? Why did no one ever mention his name to her? Why did they never meet at the houses of mutual friends? Was every one conspiring against her? Perhaps he had been nearly dying”—and her heart sank at such a possibility—“perhaps he was thinking that she was unmindful of him in his suffering, ah! he should not think that. She would write to him—he could not be angry at that.”

She began her letter “ My dear Mr. Vandeleur,” and ended “ sincerely yours;” but every line breathed of her intense anxiety and affection.

The letter pleased him—his French marquise, after coquetting in the most bewitching manner, had laughed at him, and had returned to her adorable Paris—and he had been spending some lugubrious weeks at home, where he was made to feel that he was a prodigal son, for whom the fatted calf was *not* to be killed. Mrs. Vandeleur had never learnt the fearful truth, but Miss Wilson had done her best to rouse suspicions, which had succeeded in making matters very unpleasant between husband and wife. No words were said; but who has not felt the full value of a sigh heaved at the right (or wrong?) time?—a martyr-like

compliance with every wish?—a submissive fulfilment of each duty, from which every appearance of interest is banished?—a behaviour, in short, with which no fault *can* be found, but which is aggravating to the last degree. Vandeleur, knowing that he was in the wrong, bore it very patiently, but fretted horribly beneath the yoke, and the remembrance of a pair of blue eyes raised wistfully to his—of rosy lips that had never uttered a reproach to him—of a golden head that had rested on his shoulder—arose more frequently than was at all wise, and he answered Eveline's letter in person.

CHAPTER II.

“Kyng Arthur a royale Christmasse kepte,
With mirthe and princelye cheare,
To him repaired many a knyghte,
That came both farre and neare.”

MARRIAGE OF SIR GAWAINE.

“We over-rule and over-teach,
We curb and we confine ;
And put the heart to school too soon
To learn our narrow line.

“No ; only taught by love to love,
Seems childhood’s natural task,
Affection, gentleness, and love,
Are all its brief years ask.”

CHRISTMAS was kept at Beaumanoir in right royal style. Lord Okehampton loved to gather round him at that season not only all his belongings, but as many old friends as possible. Nor were the poorer classes forgotten. Largesse was distributed with so brave a hand that, as the time grew near, Beaumanoir and the neighbourhood became the resort of more tramps and vagrants than was quite appreci-

ated by the rest of the community, and some of the magistrates of the neighbourhood had ventured to remonstrate about a liberality which caused no little trouble for some days.

“Christmas comes but once a year,” replied the earl, “and no man, woman, nor child who asks for a dinner on that day, shall be refused at Beaumanoir.”

Lord Okehampton never argued a point; and the deputation, gaining nothing by their move, returned, feeling that they had lost somewhat in the great man’s estimation; for Lord Okehampton—lord lieutenant—and of immense wealth—was a very great man in his county.

Eveline of course was bidden to Beaumanoir, and there she found little Helen Vandeleur, a pale, timid, sickly child, whom Lady Okehampton, with her usual good nature, had taken in, away from some infectious disorder that had attacked her sisters. It was much against her principles that Mrs. Vandeleur had agreed to this arrangement; for she said, “Children lost all discipline in other people’s houses, and contracted bad habits, which gave no end of trouble afterwards,” but Helen was very delicate—the doctor was very positive—and so Mrs. Vandeleur yielded.

All children loved Eveline; her gentle beauty and sweet smile won them at once. They had an intuitive knowledge that they would be welcome to *her*, whatever they might be to other people ; and loving children as she did, it can hardly be wondered at that an excess of devotion was lavished on *his* child. The little thing, in a very few days, grew so fond of her that they were rarely apart. Unused to such love and spoiling (if indeed love can spoil a child), Helen soon became a perfect tyrant ; but Eveline accepted her slavery very willingly, just as willingly as the other imposed it, so there was no question of right and might between those two.

Sceptical as Eveline had grown, she lamented too grievously over her own miserable defection and loss of that peace which nothing else can give, to say one word which could shake another's faith. What would she not have given to get back her own blessed belief which she had bartered for one year's mad, guilty happiness ! and too late she found that it is easier to pull down than build up ; but reverencing the religion of her childhood, and always tender for children, not a day passed but what she talked on the subject to little Helen, who, baby as she was, scarce seven

years old, had already imbibed more terror of a burning pit for naughty children, than love for the gentle Saviour, who, a child Himself once, had bid all little ones come unto Him.

"Mamma," said one of the young Lortons one day, "I like Evy to teach us religion."

"What *do* you mean, my dear," said Lady Okehampton, all in the dark.

"Well, she tells us such heavenly stories out of the Bible, and that poor child, Helen," (Lady Okehampton suppressed a smile at eleven thus talking of seven,) "is always talking of a burning pit, but Evy says we shall all be angels up in heaven, where all is love and happiness. Shall we, mamma?"

Lady Okehampton spoke to Pamela, and told her she feared that Eveline was making the children mope—she did not like her talking to them about death.

"If you heard the shout with which she is welcomed in the school-room, you would not fear that she moped them, mother," said Pamela. "Sad and ill as she looks, there is nothing morbid about her. You may trust the children to her very safely," and Lady Okehampton, who had perfect faith in her daughter's judgment, was satisfied. Had she wanted any corroboration of Pamela's sagacity, she had it the next day.

Off the library there was a small oriel room not much used, except by Eveline and the children, to whom it had gradually become a sanctum, where they could indulge without interruption in that inexhaustible delight—story-telling—in which art Eveline was a very Scheherazade.

Society had lost all zest for her, she crept away from it as a wounded bird creeps from its feathered companions, and gratefully sought in the companionship of these innocent children some solace from the weary aching of her heart, for though an occasional letter from Vandeleur still served to keep her from despair, she felt that she was no longer loved.

On the day in question a whole posse of children had seized on Eveline, and carried her off to their den.

“And now for a story, a good long one!” was the cry.

The room was only lighted by the dull, red glow of a fire that had burnt low, and no one perceived a long figure reposing on the dark velvet couch.

Eveline sat down on the rug—Helen in her arms—and the others disposed themselves in listening order; while she related them a wonderful story, a mixture of fable and alle-

gory, of how the child Christ visits every pillow on Christmas-eve, leaving a present for all who deserved one. Peace to some—gentleness to another—and more material gifts to little children, and that not one who loved Him was forgotten, as He went from one house to another.

“But, Evy, He never comes to our house,” said Helen. “He never gave me a present, and I am sure He never gave nurse gentleness, for she is very unkind and slaps us. Do you think He will give me one to-night?”

Lady Okehampton, who knew that her son had gone to lie down in the oriel room, on the plea of a headache, went to see how he was, when the sound of voices arrested her as she lifted the portière.

Lord Lorton drew her gently down on his sofa, signing to her to listen.

“That’s because you are not good enough,” frankly said another child. “Evy says only good children get presents. I always find one on *my* pillow.”

“Do you remember about the boy I was telling you of, who always got a present till he began to boast, and get vain-glorious, and then the angels in heaven, who write down all that we say and do—good and bad—nothing

is ever forgotten—sighed as they were obliged to write down the boasting spirit of that boy, and he got no present that Christmas-eve.”

“I didn’t hear that story,” said a child who had arrived that day; “did he never get a present again?”

“He became very ill, so ill that when the next Christmas-eve came round he could not leave his bed; but he had become very good and patient, and at night when the Christ-Child went into his room, He saw that he was in great pain, so He took him into His arms and soothed him to sleep, and then He called two angels—little children also, and they took the sleeping boy and carried him to a lovely place where he woke up, and had all the presents he could ever wish for, and where he will live for ever.”

There was a pause, and then with that *franchise brutale* (an expressive and most untranslatable word) common to children, one of them said,

“If Helen’s sisters die, will angels take them to heaven?”

“Nurse says they will go into the burning pit, if they don’t take care,” observed Helen.

“We won’t talk of dying and burning pits,” said Eveline, gently; “we know no-

thing about that, but we can all love the Child who came down from heaven because He loved us, and wanted to teach us how to love Him, so that we should never die, but only fall asleep while He and His angels carry us to heaven."

"But if we are naughty?" persisted Helen, on whom that state of being had been greatly impressed.

"Then we make that Child very unhappy—so unhappy that He, who never did anything wrong, weeps for us."

"I won't make Him cry for me, Evy," whispered Helen.

"Don't, my precious one, for no one loves you as He does," said Eveline, kissing her; "and as He loves to see you bright and gay, as well as good, especially on His birthday, let us try over our Christmas carol that you are to wake papa and mamma with to-morrow morning."

A shout of delight hailed this move, and unconscious of hearers they all began to practise an old carol that she was teaching them.

"All you that to feasting and mirth are inclin'd,
Come, here is good news for to pleasure your mind;
Old Christmas is come for to keep open house,
He scorns to be guilty of starving a mouse:
Then come, boys! and welcome for diet, the chief,
Plum-pudding, goose, turkey, mince-pies, and roast beef."

"That's just like daddy," said one of the Lortons ; "he wouldn't let a mouse starve on Christmas-Day. Everybody will have good cheer to-morrow."

"Once more, and then we will go to tea. Mademoiselle will wonder what has become of us," and the sweet young voices, following hers, sang their carol joyously, and jumping about her, followed her out of the room.

"I need not have feared that she would make the children low-spirited," said Lady Okehampton, as the door closed on the laughing group. "Lorton, what a darling she is."

Lorton understood his mother's wistful tone, and replied,

"Yes, mother, she is ; and I have sometimes asked myself whether she is an angel or not. I think to-night has settled the question ; but there is no use your wishing, I have not a chance, and my own idea is—she will become a nun," and his lordship got on his legs and stretched himself. "Come, mother, and get some tea in the school-room."

There was a merry party enough there, and as Lord Lorton came in, he began :

"Then come, boys, and welcome for diet
-Plum-pudding, no lessons and riot."

"That's wrong—it's roast beef," cried one child.

"Lorton, you have been listening!" indignantly said another.

"Has Evy been teaching you?" asked Helen.

"Yes. Evy has been teaching me something besides that," said he, stretching across the table for a slice of cake.

Eveline turned scarlet—she guessed at once what had happened, and was vexed beyond words. It was all very well her teaching children what they ought to believe and what she would give her life to get back again in unsullied purity, but for Lord Lorton to listen to her words, and think that they expressed her own feelings—which she saw he did—was dreadful. She felt a worse hypocrite than ever—deceit and double dealing whatever she did now.

"Never mind, Evy," said a child, seeing the blush, and the tears that rushed to her eyes, "he won't tell—will you, Lorton? She has taken such a lot of trouble to teach us, and it was very mean to listen."

"My dear Lorton, how can you eat that lump of unwholesomeness before dinner?"

said his father, who had a proper appreciation of a good appetite for a good *cuisine*.

"Following the example of my betters," replied his lordship, with his mouth full, and nodding towards the ladies who were similarly engaged.

A little before dressing-time, Pamela knocked at Eveline's door, and coming in, found her with Helen on her lap. Ruthless Pamela lit the candles with the observation that she hated a dismal room. The light—blink as Eveline might—showed that she was weeping. She often did now—scarce a day passed without Pamela remarking that her eyelids were red.

Ay, why did she weep? She told herself that she was weak—her nerves unstrung; for whatever her heart might forebode, she would not acknowledge that *he* was really changed to her. He had told her that it would be wiser to write but seldom, and to drop all terms of endearment, which, after all, were mere folly. He was quite right—she said—but it was none the less hard to bear. Her starving heart longed for that sweet food of loving words to which men attach so little importance after the first ebullition of passion is over, but of which women think so

much, and he had fed her so plenteously with love's sweetest vocabulary that she now pined under the dearth.

"How fond you seem of that child," said Pamela.

"Poor little pet," said Eveline, drawing the child nearer to her heart. "We are great friends, are we not, Nelly?"

"I want to be your little girl," said Helen, with a child's vague ideas on the adaptation of a mother; "you are so kind—much kinder than mamma."

This would never do, Eveline remonstrated. The child was silent, but clasped her little arms tighter round her friend.

"Come, little one, suppose you toddle off to the nursery," said Lady Gaveston, good-humouredly.

The child looked at Eveline with a white, terrified face; but being comforted, nestled down in her place again quite content.

"The child is timid," said Eveline in French, in which language they continued to talk. "She fears going about the house alone. Poor little one! she looks very fragile," and Eveline held the thin, white hand to her lips.

"You make yourself a perfect slave to that

child," said Lady Gaveston, settling herself in an easy-chair.

"So would you, dear Pamela, if you had none of your own, and a little creature clung to you as this one does to me. So much love is very precious."

"A good many others love you," said Lady Gaveston, dryly.

"You among them, dear friend," replied Eveline, holding out her hand, the ready tears springing to her eyes. "Ah! do not deem me ungrateful—I may have seemed so—I have been ill-tempered, captious—anything you like—but oh! not ungrateful! Try and bear with me, for I am not well; but do not doubt my affection: there is not a single kindness that you have shown me—and they are many—that I do not remember with tender gratitude."

"Ah! bah!" said Pamela, with her old expletive; "do not talk like that. Kindness is the inevitable fruit of affection, and we are all very fond of you."

"I wish," she added, after a pause, "I could make you believe that happiness is in your own hands. You throw it from you in the most reckless way, and are surprised that you are miserable; for, ill or well, you are far

from happy. Lorton says you will become a nun."

"Does he?" said Eveline, with a slight laugh. "That is not much in my line. I should go mad were I shut up in a cell, without books or any resource but my own thoughts. No; I am not likely to do that. Look at this child—she is fast asleep."

Lady Gaveston looked at the little wan face, and said it was a bad sign for a child to turn so waxen when sleeping. "I do not think it will live," she added.

"Not live?" exclaimed Eveline, with a *serrement de cœur*, as she thought of its father's grief if he lost his little one.

"The happiest thing that could befall it, except that which is generally an irreparable loss—its mother's death," said Pamela, in her outspoken way. "Don't look so shocked, as though I had committed murder! I spent a couple of days there a short time ago, and I assure you I was shocked to see the life the little wretches led—a sort of infantile *La Trappe*. I did my best to make them rebellious—it made me ill to see such good children."

"Yet, from what Nelly says, it would seem that they are always naughty."

“Naughty?” exclaimed Lady Gaveston. “They are too broken-spirited to be naughty. I am sure this poor little animal had better die before it goes home, for how it will bear transplanting from the extraordinary affection and spoiling you bestow on it, to the frigid zone to which it is going back, I do not quite see.”

“Does he approve of this system of bringing up?” asked Eveline, timidly, and shrinking from condemning, even in thought, anything that Mrs. Vandeleur did.

“He can’t help himself,” retorted Pamela, a little contemptuously; “he is very much afraid of her, besides which, he thinks she can’t do wrong.”

“I have heard many people say that she is an excellent woman.”

“That depends on what excellence means,” replied Pamela; “she carries her virtues to the verge of vice, and moderation is good in all things. I don’t believe in extremes—they always end on debatable ground. There is the dressing-bell. What a lovely gown!” she added, looking at the one laid out for the evening; “that lace is worth a queen’s ransom. I heard from Mr. Lovell to-day,” *effleurant* her subjects as they passed through her brain;

“he tells me something about a Mr. Joyce, whom he fears has something to do with you; he has committed every crime but murder, it would seem. Have I not heard you mention the name?”

“Very possibly. My trustee’s name is Joyce, but it can’t be him to whom Mr. Lovell alludes. He is a most excellent man—one whom everybody trusts.”

“I am glad to hear this, for I feared it might have been your man, and it appears he has decamped.”

“Another man altogether: *my* man is as steady as Old Time.”

“A bad simile,” laughed Pamela, looking at her watch, “for I know nothing that runs away so fast. Anyhow, I am relieved to find that this Joyce has nothing to do with you.”

“So am I; for not only does he hold all my property, but I should be very sorry to think that any one so thoroughly good, as I believe him to be, could do anything very bad.”

“What are you going to do with that child?” asked Lady Gaveston, seeing Eveline tenderly deposit her little charge on the sofa, and cover it up with a shawl.

. "Let it sleep till the amusements begin. Jones will watch by her."

"By-the-way, there is a child's party to-night! Don't put that gown on your mistress, Mrs. Jones — something tougher than that exquisite lace would be better. You will be torn to rags, Eveline." And Lady Gaveston, with this caution, left the room.

Little thinking how fraught with importance was the warning, Eveline changed the dress for one of velvet.

CHAPTER III.

“ What sounds were heard,
What scenes appear’d!
Dreadful gleams,
Dismal screams ;
Fires that glow,
Shrieks of woe ;
Sullen moans,
Hollow groans.”

POPE.

“ Il s’est trahi lui-même,
S’est decouvert au prince un fourbe renommé,
Et c’est un long détail d’actions toutes noires
Dont on pourrait former des volumes d’histoires.”

LE TARTUFFE.

A MAGNIFICENT Christmas-tree, laden with any number and kind of toy, wherewith to enchant any number of children, was among the evening’s amusements ; and great was the delight among the small community, as Eveline, blindfolded, sat in the midst drawing the numbers for prizes.

The men were still lingering over their wine, but most of the ladies, attracted by the contagious sound of children's mirth, had joined the juvenile party. Shouts of laughter were elicited as Eveline allotted a doll to Lord Lorton, when an awful silence, scarce enduring a second, was followed by piercing screams, and a blazing mass rushed among the company. Quick as lightning Eveline tore the bandage from her eyes, darted forward, and wrapped the burning child in the ample folds of her velvet skirt. The flames were quickly extinguished, but not before little Helen—for it proved to be she—had been most seriously injured; and shriek after shriek, elicited as much by terror as pain, broke from the child. Everybody lost their wits—a perfect Babel of voices ensued, while Eveline in vain strove to calm the sufferer. The door opened, and Lord Lorton fortunately entered. He knew not what had happened, but Eveline's face, white and horror-struck, as she tried to struggle with her burthen through the crowd, was the first thing that he saw.

“I hope she is more frightened than hurt,” said Eveline, in great agitation, as the child's screams still rent the air, “.but I cannot tell—if only I could get out of this noise.”

And ere the words had passed her lips, she found herself outside the room and the door closed behind her—so quickly does a man's presence restore order among a crowd of panic-stricken women.

"What is it?" said he, looking at the blackened mass that lay writhing in Eveline's arms.

"Helen—her frock caught fire—don't let your mother be alarmed—the other children are safe. No, thank you, I can carry her. Send Pamela to me—she is in the nursery. Hush, my darling, hush!"

"Don't put me in the burning pit!" shrieked Helen, "I *will* be good!"

"This is too dreadful," said Eveline, the tears streaming down her face. "You are with me, my child, with Evy; see, I am taking you to my room; the candle set your frock on fire—that was all; hush, darling, hush."

"Come, little one, don't cry. Evy will soon make you well," said Lord Lorton, accompanying them upstairs. "I am afraid your own arms are burnt," he added, hurrying along the corridor, and horror-struck to see the white arms he so admired scorched and blackened.

“I do not feel them. Thank you”—as he opened the door of her room—“light the candles,” and Eveline laid her burden—no longer shrieking but moaning sadly—on the bed. “Will you fetch Pamela, please? and if you *could* stop the panic below.”

Man-like, Lord Lorton could not help glancing at the small, dainty, blue silk slippers that were put before the fire, and at the blue satin dressing-gown with some marvellous fabric of cambric and lace that hung over the back of a chair; and he wondered if she slept in it, but his speculation only lasted a second, and then he went to fetch his sister.

Lady Gaveston came hurrying back with her brother, and was indeed shocked at the spectacle that met her eyes. The child was badly burnt—her muslin petticoats, of which, in honour of the day, she had had an unusual number on, were reduced to a cinder—her hair burnt off, and her little neck and arms covered with blisters.

Grieved as Lord Lorton was for the child, all his concern was for Eveline, who seemed utterly unmindful of her own blistered arms, which were red, and scorched, and covered with the burnt remnants of the lace which had trimmed her open sleeves. But being

useless in the sick room, he was desired by his sister to at once despatch a groom for the doctor, and to re-assure them below, "for," said she, "I would not for the world that our father's pleasure should be marred by this untoward accident."

Lord Lorton went down and was besieged with questions, which he stopped by saying that nothing was the matter but some burnt muslin, though he was afraid that Mrs. Greville had scorched her arms a good deal, but she said that she was not hurt, and begged they would not stop their amusement.

He took his mother aside and accompanied her to Eveline's room, where he was much relieved to find that she—Eveline—was allowing her own burns to be attended to at last; nor could he be kept from hovering in and out till the doctor came, whom he thought an awful brute for thinking less of those beautiful white arms than of the suffering child. About this latter the doctor looked very serious. She was so delicate, had so little stamina, that he feared the shock; but still with care, children had so much vitality, &c., &c.

Lady Okehampton was considerably troubled about Mrs. Vandeleur, for it was impossible to ask her to come from an infected house;

but Mrs. Vandeleur was a sensible woman, and quite understood the difficulty ; besides which, her two little girls at home were too ill, she said, to be left ; she knew that Helen would have every care bestowed on her, and ended with many thanks, and hopes that Helen would be good and obedient.

The following morning at breakfast, Eveline (who in spite of her still smarting arms was present), on opening one of her letters, changed countenance, and turning to Pamela, said—

“It is my Mr. Joyce,” and handed her a letter from her lawyer. It was very short, simply mentioning the fact that Mr. Joyce had disappeared, and it was feared had embezzled large sums of money, but that as yet no facts had been ascertained.

“I trust this will not affect you,” said Lord Okehampton, when he had heard the story.

“I really do not know ; I trust not,” said Eveline, looking very grave ; “I am not quite sure, but I think he has the power of drawing out all my money.”

“Whew !” whistled Lord Okehampton, “that was very unwise, my dear young friend, Who advised such a proceeding ?”

“He was my trustee.”

“Could he sell without your signature?”

“I am very much afraid he had the power, for he asked me to sign a paper which he said would obviate all trouble on my part, and as I had never had any money matters of any sort to attend to, I gladly accepted his offer. This was very shortly after Colonel Greville’s death.”

An ominous silence fell on the party, broken by Lord Lorton.

“There is no use in my going to town to-day. I shall find nobody there on Christmas-day, but I will go up by the first train to-morrow, and if you will give me a note to your lawyer, I will go and see him, and learn what I can from him.”

Universal sympathy was felt for Mrs. Greville, all the more that she bore this trouble so bravely. “The worst may not be so bad as we fear,” she said, “let us wait till we know.”

However, the worst was as bad as could be, as Lord Lorton soon discovered when he was shown into Mr. Thompson’s room.

“Mrs. Greville seems hopeful,” said he, on announcing his business; “I only trust that she may be right.”

“Ladies know nothing of business,” retorted

the lawyer ; “ I only wish my client had any reason for being hopeful. Why is she hopeful ? Because she has pinned her faith on a scoundrel. His affairs have not yet been investigated, but it is known that he has been speculating very largely, and has disappeared leaving enormous liabilities.”

“ But Mrs. Greville is surely not responsible for his debts ? ”

“ God bless my soul ! sir, no ! *she* is not, but her money has long since gone, I expect, to pay for his vagaries.”

“ How came he to hold all her money ? I imagined a trust ended if a widow was left without children.”

“ There’s the folly ! the madness ! I drew up the settlements, which were not made till after the marriage, and then Colonel Greville settled everything he had—all funded property, the very thing for a lady—on her. This Joyce, and two others, were appointed trustees. Within a year of the colonel’s death two of these men died—not Joyce, worse luck !—and I then waited on Mrs. Greville and suggested the expediency of appointing two others in their place. I thought it better for a lady—the prey of any sharper—not to have the control of her capital. However, this

Joyce had been beforehand with me, and had persuaded her to let matters remain as they were, and I could do nothing with her. She believed in Joyce—as for the matter of that every one did—and if only half I hear be true he has squandered every farthing.”

“Whew!” whistled Lord Lorton. “Had she no other property?”

“Yes, Colonel Greville also executed a will entitling her to any money he might at any time become possessed of, and his sister left fifteen hundred pounds a-year and that place in Wales to Mrs. Greville.”

“Come then,” said Lord Lorton, much relieved, “she will not starve. The Welsh property is safe, I hope?”

“The house is; but what is that? A mere fancy place, that ten to one no one would purchase; and as to the income—Joyce persuaded her to sign a power of attorney over *that*. So far as I see at present, all she has is the house in Wales, the one in Lowndes Square, and the interest of ten thousand pounds that fell in last year by the death of some relation of Colonel Greville’s, and which I invested for her in India bonds, and which stand in her name; and, luckily I hold the title-deeds of the London house. I bought

the house in her name naturally, and had Joyce made any difficulty, I should have suspected foul play somewhere; but the rascal was too deep for me. No one ever suspected Joyce," continued the lawyer, irascibly—"one of those sanctimonious scoundrels, sir, who take in every one—regular church-goer, daily prayers—well, well!" and Mr. Thompson turned over some papers in an irritable manner.

"Can't this Mr. Joyce be prosecuted?"

"Prosecuted and persecuted," said Mr. Thompson, with grim wit; "but where is the good of kicking against a stone wall—breaking one's shins to no purpose? I don't suppose Mrs. Greville would have much satisfaction in transporting him, which is about all she would have. Two hundred thousand pounds gone! Tst-tst-tst!" And Mr. Thompson rapped the palm of his hand with a paper-knife.

"This is indeed a bad business," said Lorton, gravely.

"Bad business!" said the lawyer, irritably; "as bad as any I have heard of—and to think the scoundrel should have duped every one up to the last!"

"Can you form no idea of what you can

save from the wreck?" asked Lord Lorton, anxiously.

"Not at present. A good deal depends on what debts Mrs. Greville may have; for there will be no dividends to meet them. She has drawn so largely on her bankers lately for charities, and what not, that she has actually over-checqued her balance; but when a lady is expecting four thousand pounds to be paid to her account in a few days, one can say nothing."

"I am afraid I have very bad news to take back."

"Yes, sir, very bad; and the sooner she comes up the better," said Mr. Thompson, testily. "The thing will get wind fast enough, and creditors will be pouring in on her before she can turn round."

Lord Lorton met Lovell at the club, where they talked the matter over; and shortly after, Frank Lovell sped to Lincoln's Inn as fast as a hansom could take him.

"Pressed by creditors, my darling! not if I know it!" soliloquised he on his route.

"Mr. Thompson, I believe?"

"At your service, sir;" and even the grim, testy lawyer relaxed as he looked on the frank, winsome face before him.

“I have come to you about that rascally Joyce affair. I have just seen Lord Lorton, and from what he says I fear there may be some want of money—in Mrs. Greville’s case, I mean,” Lovell explained. “Of course, none of her friends would allow her to be worried; but you see, some may not—in short, you know what I mean. I have fifty thousand pounds I have no use for—of course, my name need not appear—but draw on me for any sum you want for her. Of course Mrs. Greville will settle with me later, but just at first she may be worried to find ready money. You can put it to her in the light of an investment—anything you like—only I had rather my name did not appear. This is strictly private, you know.” And coming to the end of a hurried and somewhat incoherent speech, with a flushed face, Lovell looked out of window.

“In love, of course; and I’ll be bound that fifty thousand pounds is his whole fortune. Reckless young dog!”—this to himself. Aloud —“My dear sir, this is very generous on your part; but believe me, there is no need. I am this moment writing to my client for instructions to sell out some stock she holds—more than sufficient to cover all immediate calls; for, though a liberal woman, Mrs. Gre-

ville is not extravagant, except in the matter of charities.

“The darling!” muttered Lovell. “I must apologise if I have troubled you unnecessarily; but look here, don’t you let her be worried. Here is my card, and my lawyers are old Quill and Driver over the way.” And giving Mr. Thompson a grasp of the hand, which that gentleman’s fingers were a long time forgetting, young Lovell ran down stairs, and astounded the firm “over the way,” by telling it that it must be ready at any moment to sell out any amount of stock.

“Gambling—without a doubt—or racing,” said the elder partner of the firm, pushing the spectacles on to his forehead; but Lovell was gone ere he could begin his homily. “Well, I did think that lad was steady—all alike, all alike!” and the old gentleman sadly shook his head over the recusant youth of the period.

CHAPTER IV.

"*Q. Mar.* Great lords, brave men ne'er sit and bewail their
loss,
But cheerily seek how to redress their harms."

HENRY VI.

"For myself
She is so conjunctive to my life and soul,
That as the star moves not but in his sphere,
I could not but by her."

HAMLET.

MRS. GREVILLE did not obey Mr. Thompson's request of immediately going to town to attend to her affairs, for little Helen Vandeleur lay hovering between life and death, and refused to be comforted by any one but "Evy," for whom she incessantly cried; and Eveline's devotion was unwearied. Night and day—unmindful of her own smarting arms—she watched by the sick child, singing to her, amusing her, and calming the poor restless little thing by an influence that seemed mes-

meric, though all the time she knew that ruin was hovering over her ; but this did not affect her now as it would have done some few months ago. She was bankrupt in more than money—she was bankrupt in heart, and bankrupt in honour. The sunlight of her life had faded away, and what mattered whether the darkness were a little greater or a little less ?

“Alas ! the breast that inly bleeds
Hath nought to dread from outward blows !”

Vandeleur did not make his child's accident a plea for going to Beaumanoir, and though Eveline would not acknowledge it to herself, as each post came and brought no word of his coming, her heart sank within her. His letters were chiefly to Lady Okehampton, but at last came one to her, thanking her for her kindness to his child, and expressing a hope that the “rumour which he had heard of her losses was exaggerated, and that all would eventually come right. He did not go to Beaumanoir, for not only had he several engagements to fulfil, but he was sure that she would agree with him in thinking it far better that they should not meet at present. Nothing, however, could alter his esteem nor his gratitude for her care of his child.”

She read the letter again and again, trying to find some hidden tenderness in the civil, measured terms which might have been addressed to a stranger, but in vain. There was no hiding it from herself. His affection for her was gone. His careless mention of her ruin showed a total absence of interest and sympathy. A cold, sick feeling crept over her, as a few unconscious tears stole down her pale cheeks. She was too numbed to realise all she felt. A low moan from the next room roused her, and with a weary sigh she went back to tend his child with the same unremitting care and unwearied tenderness, but otherwise she went about like one in a dream—very quiet, very patient. People said how well she bore her reverses, and began to wonder if she really understood their extent. She understood well enough—*only*—she had a heavier trouble to bear. What were worldly riches in comparison to *his* love?

“When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions.”

“Adonde vas, mal? Adonde mas hay,”
saith the Spanish proverb.

When Eveline learnt the full extent of her losses, she wrote to her lawyer desiring him to sell out a certain portion of her India Stock

sufficient to meet all outstanding claims, and to advertise the town house for sale, but on no account to allow any one to go over it till she could go up and remove certain things which she wished to retain. She should keep the Welsh cottage, she said, but if he would do his best to find places for her servants, she would be very glad. She had written to them, she said, and told them that she would retain them till they had found other situations; they had served her faithfully many years, and she would not have them hurried. She was sorry she could not go up to town, but she was nursing a sick child, and could not well be spared.

This clear, calm, business-like letter surprised Mr. Thompson, and considerably raised his opinion of his client. No regrets, no reproaches, no bemoaning her losses, simply a plain statement of what she wished done. "A man could not have borne it better," thought he.

"Not so well, probably," say I.

Meantime, little Helen still continued to linger in a very unsatisfactory state, and was unable to leave the sick room, which Lord Lorton never failed to visit, at all events, once in the day. His interest in the invalid

was most praiseworthy. No sooner was he divested of his hunting or shooting clothes, than, armed with flowers, or fruit, or toys—or might be all three—he went to a room where he was always gladly admitted, bringing in with him a whole atmosphere of health, spirits, and invigoration. A visit from him was soon regarded as the event of the day, and watched for by the sick child with feverish impatience.

All honour to Lord Lorton for his humanity; but would it have been so unremitting, and would he have watched the graceful nurse with a longing desire to break his collar-bone, or some such trifle, to ensure similar attendance, if, instead of Eveline, a Mrs. Gamp had presided there? Let us not inquire too closely. And Eveline, full of anxieties on her own account, and on that of the child of whom she had taken complete charge, ever welcomed with a smile the pleasant interruption to her sad thoughts.

“I wonder if any one knows how many bills they have,” she said one day at breakfast, as she opened one after another a heap of ominous-looking letters.

“I make a point of never looking at mine,” said Mr. Devereux, who was there for a week’s

hunting; "I couldn't pay them if I did, so I string them up—a votive offering to long-suffering tradesmen."

"An offering scarcely appreciated at its proper value, I imagine," said Pamela.

"No use in dunning—I suppose they will get paid some day, and the rascals know it. I say, Lorton, I'll give you two hundred for that bay mare of yours."

Lorton laughed, glanced at Eveline, and said that he had changed his mind about selling.

It was later in the day, and he was standing booted and spurred after the day's hunting, in his sister's dressing-room.

"Is it not strange," Lady Gaveston was saying, "that neither Mr. nor Mrs. Vandeleur come to see their child? I cannot understand it. *She* may still keep away from fear of bringing infection, but one would think *he* would come."

Lord Lorton smashed down the fire with the heel of his boot, a masculine way of poking it, and then said—

"Possibly Mrs. Greville has forbidden him."

Pamela did not like to say that as her brother's suspicions concerning Eveline's feel-

ings for Vandeleur had decreased, her own had become more serious.

Lord Lorton had been abroad all the summer. Lost in his own thoughts, he did not remark her silence.

"I think," he pursued, "that I was mistaken in what I told you at Gaveston last year—do you remember?—or if danger there were, it is all over."

"I cannot make her out," said Pamela. "Though our friendship is uninterrupted, all confidence seems at an end between us."

"You women are so deuced fond of raking over each other's hearts," said her brother.

Pamela laughed. "As a rule, women's confidences bore me, and I am not a very propitious receptacle for such; but I confess I am hurt at the quasi-coldness that somehow does exist between Eveline and myself."

"Perhaps the fault is on your side."

"Yes, and no. *Elle ne m'en voulut pas* when I said the same thing about Mr. Challenor, who was always at her house. She was furious, and there it ended; but when I remonstrated about Mr. Vandeleur, she took it very gently, and cried most bitterly—in fact we had a very painful scene—and from that day a barrier has risen up between us, though

I must say that he gave up his daily visits at her house."

"I never liked Vandeleur, and the more I see of *her*, the less I can conceive her liking him."

"We women *do* take odd likes sometimes," quoth Lady Gaveston ; "but mind you, I have not the slightest reason for supposing that she cares for him in the least ; only, I often see her in tears, and all her old *gaieté de cœur*, that was so charming, has gone."

"A woman does not lose a fine fortune without wincing, though she does bear her trouble like an angel—then nursing that child is enough to wear her out. I heard her singing to it at one o'clock this morning—you really should not allow it."

"She will do it ; the child cries for her, and she goes. For my part, I should be better pleased to see her less philosophical about the loss of her fortune. She looks to me like one too crushed by one sorrow to be *able* to care for any other."

"You are mistaken in supposing that she don't mind the loss of her fortune. She was talking to me about it only yesterday ; but she bears up like a heroine. And as to her caring for Vandeleur, all I can say is, that if such a

woman cared for me—married or single—by George! I would go across the world to see her—that is to say,” he amended, “married to such a she-devil as Vandeleur’s.”

“What depraved sentiments!” cried Pamela. “Fortunately you have no wife to hear you, and I beg you will not corrupt my husband’s morals! My own fear is—and of course she cannot own it—that her heart has been touched by Vandeleur, and she will not allow him to come.”

“Pshaw! my dear girl, do you suppose that any prohibition would keep a man from a woman who loved him, especially when there was such an excuse as there is here?”

“Well, they will both—the Vandeleurs I mean—have to be sent for, I expect. The doctor looks very grave about Helen.”

“If the child recovers they will owe it entirely to Mrs. Greville,” said he, turning to leave the room.

He had grown to love Eveline too dearly in the two months that they had been thrown daily together, to care to believe anything against her; and her temper was so even, her gentleness so unvarying, her unselfishness so unparalleled, that her very sadness had a charm for him. “Surely there was plenty of cause

for sadness without looking far for it—cooped up for two months in a sick room, and losing a handsome fortune, was enough to make any one not only sad, but ill-tempered and sour, and there was she bearing it all without a murmur,” thought he, as he changed his clothes before paying his visit to the sick room. The very fact of Pamela being inclined to doubt her, made him instantly take up the cudgels for her himself, and it was with warmer feelings than ever that he entered the sick room to bid his little friend good-bye for a few days, for he was going to a friend’s last shoot of the season.

“We shall miss you terribly,” said Eveline. “You have been like a breath of mountain air to us.”

“I shall like to think that you will miss me,” said he, looking at her with more love than investigation in those earnest eyes of his. “It will make my time pass much more pleasantly if I can only flatter myself that I shall be—not quite forgotten—here.”

“Dear Lord Lorton,” said Eveline, on whom the wistful tone was not lost, “we shall never forget you—neither Nelly nor I—but always think kindly of the bright cheery

brother who has whiled away many a suffering hour."

"Yes, Evy's great, big brother," endorsed a weak, little voice from the bed.

Lorton bit his lips, and Eveline smiled. "'Out of the mouths of babes cometh wisdom,'" said she.

"And shall Evy be your sister?" said Lorton to the child.

"No; I am Evy's own little girl," said she, decidedly.

He laughed. Evidently he had no ally there, and with a few words more tender in tone than in actual meaning, he bid Mrs. Greville farewell for the next few days.

The following day Helen became so much worse that her parents were telegraphed for. An answer came from Vandeleur to the effect that his wife was too ill to leave her room, but that he would be at Beaumanoir on the following day, an event which caused Eveline no little trepidation. She dreaded meeting him, and knew not how to avoid him, for Helen had rallied, and refused to have her out of her sight; and the doctor said it was as much as the child's life was worth to contradict her just now.

Cold, distant and proud was her demeanour

to the man she loved with every fibre of her heart, as he came into his child's room with Lady Okehampton.

The doctor was at the bedside, watching the flickering life which a few hours before had been at the point of departure. "The child will live," he said, "and you owe it entirely to Mrs. Greville's unremitting care and devotion. She has sacrificed herself most completely ; and I expect to have *her* on my hands next."

Vandeleur was fond of his children, not so fond perhaps as his words would lead others to imagine—people do sometimes exaggerate to themselves the magnitude of their feelings—but he could not see his little one rescued from the jaws of death without being much affected, and the tears stood in his eyes as he turned to thank Eveline with a look that had she seen it would have gone a long way in repaying her for all she had endured. But her face was averted. Her studied coldness piqued him.

She could not keep a father from his child's room ; but *she* need not be there ; and accordingly the next day, *his* entrance was the signal for *her* leaving it—and then Helen cried herself worse, because her friend had

gone, and she had to return. So it came about that Vandeleur had speech of her and found it not very difficult to persuade her that his sufferings had to the full equalled hers, that all his apparent coldness had been simulated for her sake ; and his whispered, "I didn't mean to be unkind," put the finishing touch to his eloquence.

He loved her still ! He had been as wretched as herself ! What more could she ask ? Nothing, in good sooth ; and the light returned to her eye, and the smile to her lip. Too glad to believe, she was easily persuaded that his affection had never wavered. All the past was forgiven — forgotten in the blessed belief that he loved her still !

" If sin there be in aught sublime
Forgiveness is a woman's crime."

Loath to part with the child she loved, and whose life she had saved, Eveline begged to be allowed to take her to Wales for change of air ; but Mrs. Vandeleur wrote to refuse, and to say that she herself would be able to come and take Helen home before many days were over.

Vandeleur's engagements took him from Beaumanoir after a very short visit, and he

had already gone when Lorton returned from his shooting party.

Now Lord Lorton was in the prime of life, healthy in mind and body, and had thoroughly enjoyed his week's shooting. The sport had been first-rate, and the party—a man's party—had consisted of old friends, and he had passed a very pleasant, cheery time; but not the least part of his pleasure was the anticipation, on his return home, of the sweet, quiet hour that for a month past he had learnt to look forward to after his day's sport; but “a change had come over the spirit of his dream.” Even on the day of his return Helen had been promoted to a sofa in the school-room where, Lady Okehampton said, the companionship of children would expedite her recovery.

“‘L’homme propose, Dieu dispose,’” said he, as, half laughing, half vexed, he told Eveline of his disappointment; “but now that you are a free agent again, I shall take you out for some fresh air. The ground is too hard for hunting, but is excellent for walking. Put on your hat and furs, and come with me. Wrap up well, for it is cold.”

This was after luncheon. She gladly acceded for she was pining for a breath of pure

fresh air and a good healthy walk ; but she somewhat discomfited her cavalier, by asking Lord Okehampton to join them, and as this latter enjoyed a walk with a pretty woman (on a frosty day, when hunting was out of the question) quite as much as his son did, he at once acquiesced.

“The old fellows get a chance sometimes, eh, Lorton ?” said the earl, laying his hand on his son’s shoulder ; “but I’ll not go if you don’t wish it. I am not blind, my dear boy ; and though money is not to be despised, the loss of her fortune need be no obstacle. Your mother and I are very fond of her.”

“Thank you, father, I understand you,” said Lorton, with a grip of his powerful but shapely hand, “but I have little or no reason for entertaining such high hopes. By all means come with us.”

Lord Lorton was not altogether sorry that his father made a third in their walk. Mrs. Greville’s society was extremely pleasant to him, and he liked enjoying it without any drawback, which on the present occasion he could do, for he and his father were on excellent terms.

There was a sad scene when Mrs. Vandeleur came to take Helen home. The child—

shrinking from her mother—clung to Eveline and imploring her not to send her from her, sobbed as if her little heart would break. Mrs. Vandeleur was hurt, offended, angry; but instead of using the tender caresses that would have won the child to her, she desired the nurse to carry Miss Helen to the carriage, “shocked,” she said, “at such an ebullition of temper.”

But Eveline took the sobbing child herself, whispering words of love and comfort, weeping herself all the time, and she had the satisfaction of seeing the poor little creature sob itself to sleep before its mother came out.

Lady Gaveston spoke out very plainly, Lady Okehampton more gently, but Mrs. Vandeleur had the same answer for both. “Children must learn to control their tempers, and to bear disappointments—the earlier the better.”

“And that is a mother!” cried Pamela, indignantly, when Mrs. Vandeleur had gone. “It is a pity the child ever came here to learn that there is a less loveless home than its own.”

“Poor little soul! I hope they will be kind to it. She is the dearest child I ever knew.” This from Eveline, who had returned

to the drawing-room as Pamela was speaking, and was standing in the window, watching the carriage drive away with her late charge.

The next day she left her friends, and went to London, Mr. Thompson being extremely impatient for her presence in town, and for her to reduce her establishment, and, in short, to see to her affairs generally, in which, he told her, she was showing extraordinary apathy.

She laughed at the old man's irritability, but soon proved to him that, however apathetic he may have thought her, her plans were settled, and very decidedly too.

"It is useless your talking about selling my house in Wales ; nothing will induce me to part with it, no matter what offer you may have for it," said she. "After all, it is the gardens which are the expense, and they must be put down, great as the sacrifice is, for I suppose my present income would not cover what they have cost me?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Thompson ; "and I have not sold your India stock—the interest is too large—but I have advanced the money, and it occurs to me that you might part with some pictures and china, and other gimcracks," and Mr. Thompson looked contemptuously at

the rare collection of Sèvres and Dresden, which represented to him nothing but so much delf, which could be converted into £ s. d.

“Sell my china!” exclaimed Eveline, with a pang with which a connoisseur will sympathise.

“Why not?” was the unfeeling answer. “What’s the use of it? and that picture there—I got an artist to come and look at it, and he says that any dealer will give you two thousand for it.”

“My Carlo Dolci!” again exclaimed Eveline; “this is too dreadful!”

“Not at all. If you are so fond of it, copy it, and hang it up—not one in ten will know the difference.”

Mrs. Greville could not help smiling, even in the midst of all her distress.

“Take my advice,” said the lawyer, with more gentleness of manner. “In these cases the first sacrifice is the least. Make up your mind to part with every superfluity at once; let me invest the money, and I think that, with a little management, I can secure you an income of a thousand a year; and if you would make up your mind to part with your

Welsh place, a Bristol merchant has offered five thousand for it if you would sell."

"What! let a Bristol merchant live in a spot hallowed to me by every recollection? No! not for five hundred times five thousand!" cried Eveline. "I will shut up the houses, do away with the gardens, sell my pictures, my china—but not if I were starving would I sell Llanfenydd."

"Well, well, there's no harm done," said Mr. Thompson, liking her none the worse for her blazing eyes and flushing cheeks; "make out your list of what you will part with, I will see that the things are removed, and then the house can be shown."

"Lord Lorton," said the servant, ushering him in.

"Just come in the nick of time, my lord," said Mr. Thompson. "We have been in the tantrums, and I was about to make my escape! Lose no time about the list, my dear lady, and trust an old friend of your husband's to do his best for you. Good morning."

"I am afraid this has been a very trying interview," said Lord Lorton, sitting down beside her.

"It has indeed. I never realised till now the sacrifices I should have to make. At a

distance—watching over that dying child—all looked so much easier; but now that I am here, deciding on the sale of pictures, china, plate—a thousand things that made life so pleasant—I feel indeed shipwrecked. And an odious man has been offering to buy Llanfenydd! That it should ever have come to this!” and poor Eveline burst into tears.

“But why should it? You will not part with that?”

“No, no! a thousand times, no! The mere fact of anyone asking me to sell is terrible, and brings the reality before me as I had never seen it. Of course, *this* house must go,” she continued, blind to the evident agitation of her companion, who was walking up and down the room; “yes, and that picture you are looking at—my Carlo Dolci that I am so fond of.” (He was not looking at it—at least, he was not *seeing* it—but she did not remark his abstraction.) “There is a fatality about that picture. We bought it in Rome—a poor old woman sold it to buy food for her son, an artist, who was dying of consumption. Neither Colonel Greville nor I knew much about pictures in those days, and as the old woman was too proud to accept any aid, we bought this picture of her, and gave

her a hundred pounds for it, thinking it not worth ten ; and a year or two after, when we were less ignorant of art, in passing through Rome, we sought for the people, but both were dead, and no one knew anything about them. So that is how I have got it ; and now it is to be sold to buy *me* bread," she said, bitterly.

"But why sell it ? Why leave this house at all ?" said Lord Lorton. "Eveline, dear Eveline, say but one word to me. You know that I love you."

He knelt by her side, and would fain have drawn her to him. A thousand thoughts flashed through her brain. Vandeleur—for whom she had sacrificed her whole life—no longer loved her. Hope and trust as she might, she could not deceive herself ; she was very little to him now—he had not even written to her in the midst of all her troubles ; he had been in town too, but had never been to see her. Discarded, neglected by him, shame hanging over her, and reverses staring her in the face on the one hand. On the other, a man—a thorough gentleman—whom she cordially liked, was offering her a true, honest, manly love ! She would not have been human if the contrast had not for a moment tempted her.

Instead of cherishing an unlawful love which had already died out, leaving her a wretched, broken-hearted woman, a prey to the most harrowing feelings, torn by a love which was no longer valued, and which was a dishonour, a disgrace to entertain even in thought, she might be a loved and honoured wife—a happy mother, perhaps—possessing a love that she might be proud of; that she might publish to the world and glory in; and last, not least, bless the life of an honourable man, who loved her with a love worth having.

Ay, but what was *she*? were such joys for *her* who had placed betwixt herself and such happiness an impassable barrier?

Shrinking in horror from what she felt was treachery to the trustful man who was kneeling at her feet, in having even for a moment contemplated the possibility of becoming his wife, she turned from the passionate words which her silence—albeit it lasted but a minute—had encouraged him to pour forth.

Covering her averted face with one hand, she stretched forth the other with a mute but eloquent gesture of warding him off.

“Eveline, I will not take this denial—for the hope of my life goes with it. You may not love me now, but give me the right to

win that love—give me the right of protecting you against all earthly ills—let me call you by the sweet, holy name of wife. Eveline, will you not be mine—the bright star of my existence—my honoured wife, and—God willing—the mother of my children? Eveline! will you not speak to me?”

For she was weeping with a violence that terrified him, and the face she then lifted to his was ashen white. She strove to speak, but her parched lips refused utterance to the words she would have spoken. At last—“Do not think me ungrateful—”

“There is no gratitude where there is love, Eveline,” interrupted he, sadly.

“No—not where love is given for love,” said she—“but—”

“Have you *none* for me? Is it *quite* hopeless?” and his voice assumed the most touching sadness.

She was standing near him—her hands, which were clasped on her bosom, fell before her—she looked at him with pitiful tenderness—with a sad yearning as of one who sees from a sinking ship the departure of his last boat, from which a sense of duty has kept him—and she said, in a voice which, though very gentle, was firm almost to hardness—for

it needed all her courage to stay by her sinking ship, and bid her boat depart without her—

“Quite hopeless, Lord Lorton.”

And he, after one yearning look at the lovely, but rigid—pitiless—face, read his fate—the iron entered his soul. He turned and left the room—his heart swelling with a terrible curse on Vandeleur—but he crushed down the vile thought that implicated her. No, he would not believe aught against *her*.

Could he have seen into that room once more, both their fates might have been altered. Eveline stood where he had left her—not marble was more rigid—a look of hopeless despair on her beautiful features, such as no man could have seen unmoved, and the tenderness which he could not but have shown her would have opened the fount of her sorrow. All would have been told in that terrible moment, when a neglected woman's feelings wildly seek, like a spray of ivy torn from its support, for some place whereon to cling.

What the result might have been, who can say?

But he did not return; and meeting a man at his club he said, as he smoked his cigar

with a calmness that no one could have impeached,

“You were talking last night of a trip through Spain, Burton. If you have not decided on any one specially—I’m your man.”

And Lord Lorton, being much given to sudden trips abroad, it excited no astonishment when a letter reached his people at Beaumanoir, to say that his next address would be Saragoza.

CHAPTER V.

Ser. As we do turn our backs'
From our companion, thrown into his grave,
So his familiars to his buried fortunes
Slink all away ; leave their false vows with him
Like empty purses picked."

TIMON OF ATHENS.

"An agony shall come
In that instant waking,
Like a dagger driven home,
Like a nerve in breaking."

MILNES.

THE beginning of May saw Mrs. Greville's affairs arranged, and herself settled for the season in some pretty rooms in an off-street near Grosvenor Square.

She had made them very lady-like and charming, but they were only lodgings, and she had taken them because life had become unendurable away from Vandeleur. His visits were not frequent as of yore, but he

would come once a week at all events, and she treasured every sight of him now as a miser treasures his gold.

The story of her fallen fortunes quickly spread, and when it was known that she had come to town—to lodgings too!—the world with its usual sagacity said that of course she had come with the intention of marrying, and that the fastidious Mrs. Greville would be content, perhaps, with something under a Duke now.

Though her real friends remained staunch she speedily found that

“In time of prosperity friends will be plenty,
In times of adversity not one in twenty,”

and smiled somewhat bitterly as she marked the careless bow—the *insouciant* answer—the omission in calling—of those who last year had besieged “dear Mrs. Greville” for invitations to her own *réunions* (which, if small, were composed of the first people in society), or to some very select thing—very hard to get to; but now that “dearest Mrs. Greville” was down in the world—living in small lodgings—of no use—she was proportionately abused, for the whispers that had glided off the rich Mrs. Greville, who was so powerfully

protected, had somehow crept about again now that she least deserved them ; and those who, following in the train of their betters, had last year scouted all evil reports, now shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders when Mrs. Greville was named.

“ Arbore dejectâ quivis, colligit ligna.”

Scandal is a subtle seed, and once sown, trample on it as you may, you cannot so stamp the life out of it, but what it takes root somewhere—perchance in some little out-of-the-way corner—to crop up when least expected ; and as few follow the old proverb, *Crees nada de lo que oyes, y la mitad de lo que vees*, it soon spreads ; and if “ the whitest virtue cannot oppose back-wounding calumny,” woe to those on whose fair escutcheon lies the faintest blur.

Meanwhile, Eveline’s heart was daily growing more and more heavy—more and more sad. She strove by additional tenderness to win back if only a kindly friendship from the man to whom she had sacrificed all, but her efforts met with less and less response, till her interviews with Vandeleur rarely ended without tears—a sight which considerably irritated him.

One day, some such scene had occurred, and, repulsed more by manner than words, she sat down at some distance from him and took up her work.

“What on earth are you crying for, now?” said he, after watching in silence the tears that fell unheeded on her hands. “Always tears now when I come.”

“Forgive me, dear,” she said, his rough tone making her tears fall faster than ever, “but I am so unhappy. You are so changed to me, and you are *my all*.”

“Have I not told you that I am not changed? A man cannot go on repeating the same thing all day. I call on you more frequently than on any other lady of my acquaintance—what more do you want?”

“Nothing more, indeed, if I still have your friendship—your affection. Oh! Henry,” and yielding to the impulse she knelt at his feet as he stood there, “if you could only know how dear you are to me—how precious are a few kind words from you—you would not be so chary of them, or be so hard to me as you are. I deserve all—anything—everything—but oh! not at your hands!”

Foolish, foolish woman! as though a man ever liked a woman the better for humiliating

herself! She was clinging to his knees, her tearful face upturned with an expression of hopeless agony written on it. Ah!—

“Ask not, hope not, one relenting thought
From him who doomed thee thus to waste away.”

Vandeleur was not touched; he was annoyed, and bid her “not lie there—the servants might come in.” But he did not even stretch forth a finger to help her.

Deeply wounded, she crept back to her chair, where, her face slightly averted, she listened in silence to a somewhat long peroration from him, of *his* kindness and *her* folly, till, unable to bear it any longer, she said with a forced smile, though her lips quivered.

“You shall leave me now—I am not very well, and I shall be better alone.”

There was a certain dignity in her manner which did her better service than the former proceeding.

“Come, don’t be a foolish child,” said he; “learn to have a little more faith in me, and don’t welcome me with tears any more.”

He kissed her forehead, carelessly enough; but grateful for the kinder tone, she pressed his hand to her lips—but tears as well as kisses were left thereon.

“Crying again !” said he, irritably, and leaving the room.

Perhaps his conscience smote him afterwards, for the next day he called, bringing little Helen, whom she had not seen since the parting at Beaumanoir. Crushed by four or five months’ cold discipline, the child was very shy at first, but soon thawing beneath Eveline’s loving tenderness, she returned to her old fond ways, as though they had never parted. It was a happy visit—for he, too, had been kind and gentle—and Eveline once more looked bright.

He was calling a few days after, and they were talking of Mr. Joyce, and the misfortunes he had brought upon her, when, impelled by some feeling or other, she—withholding Lord Lorton’s name—told him of the generous proposal she had had.

“And you ?” said he, with the sudden feeling of a man who thinks that he is about to lose something—which though no longer dear to him—he still considers as his own.

Eveline marked the look, and thinking “I am still dear enough to him for him to care about losing me,” said, with a fond smile, “Can you ask ? Do you think that I could marry any one ?”

Assured of his unassailable position, the momentary feeling passed away.

"I don't see why you should not," said he.

She gave him one look—and shrank back. There was an expression of insolent admiration in his face, which made her recoil, wishing the earth could open and swallow her up—and she durst not resent it! She looked at him furtively. Had he been drinking? Hardly. People don't drink at one o'clock in the day. She cowered down in an agony of horror and shame, when fortunately the door opened, and Lady Gaveston was announced. Nor did Eveline fail to notice the change to cordial respect in Vandeleur's greeting of Pamela.

Love is hard to eradicate in a woman's breast, or Eveline would have hated the man who had thus looked at her, but with the wonderful power of love, she found a thousand excuses for him, and forgave him.

One evening at a small party she was talking to a group of people, when Mrs. Vandeleur came in. Eveline went up, shook hands, and asked after Helen. Always very freezing in manner, Mrs. Vandeleur was stiffer than usual in her reception of Mrs. Greville. In a very few minutes Eveline, finding herself standing alone, crossed the room to mingle in

the little crowd which had congregated there. But the crowd dispersed, and she was again alone. She spoke to a lady near her, who gave a careless answer, and turned away.

Eveline looked up, and caught the cold glitter of Mrs. Vandeleur's eyes, as with a contemptuous glance at her, she whispered to her neighbour.

Forgetful of all save the marked insult to herself, Eveline swept out of the room, her heart throbbing with fear and anger, and with a haughty bow to her hostess, whom she had to pass, she descended the stairs alone, refusing in the most distant manner the offer of two or three men to see her to her carriage.

"Hullo ! the Greville's in a passion ! What's the row ?" "Deuced handsome she looked too !" Such were the comments the men passed.

Next day she told Vandeleur. He pooh-poohed the whole affair—told her she was fanciful—that his wife had not even mentioned meeting her.

She did not dispute the point, but told him that she intended leaving town the next day.

"Best thing you can do," said he. "You are not looking well, and how you can live in these pokey lodgings, I don't know."

And she had lived in the “pokey lodgings” to be near him—to be able to see him sometimes—as she would have lived in a garret for the pleasure of seeing him, if only in the street below!—and she had gone to no little expense—more than she could well afford—to make the said “pokey lodgings” look bright and pretty to welcome *him*.

He told her that he would come and bid her good-bye on the following morning, but the morning brought a note to say that he was going with a friend to look at a horse at Tattersall’s, and would be prevented coming to see her, but he hoped to meet her next season looking better than she was now.

It was only one more blow—she had had so many of late that she was already well nigh stunned—and she simply bent her head to the blast. She would soon be at home, and then she would have peace and rest. Was it so long ago that she had been there? She could not recollect, and pressing her hands on her throbbing temples, endeavoured to recall her memory. She tried to occupy herself by packing up a few costly trifles which she had brought from her other house to make her present rooms look pretty in the sight of one who after all had pronounced them “pokey”—

anything to do to stop the weary pain at her heart—she sent for the landlady, settled with her, and this latter, seeing that duchesses and countesses called on her lodger, was very civil, and so sympathising, that Eveline gladly dismissed her. Still four weary hours to wait! she thought, with the numb yet restless feeling that often precedes a fever.

At last it was time to start, and in the same dull lethargic state she got into the train and went home.

Next day she was in a high fever—the tension had been too great, and for some days she lay almost between life and death. But her appointed time had not come, and she rallied—rallied to a sense of hopeless misery. She would sit for hours in a state of weary abstraction, from which nothing could rouse her—not that she had any particular train of thought—she could not grasp any one idea; thoughts flitted through her tired brain without leaving any trace thereon. A terrible restlessness succeeded, and then came a wild longing to go back to Bournemouth and wander over places where he had been so loving, so tender, to her. Was he no longer tender to her? Surely. She was in a bad dream, that was all.

To Bournemouth she went, and there she revived. There was a happiness in wandering over the old loved spots—in recalling his words—in thinking tenderly of him.

“How wrong was Dante,” she thought, as resting on the seashore, the sound of the murmuring tide lulled her. “There *is* a pleasure in looking back, even when all is gone. But it is *not* gone! Ah! he will love me again—I know he will—my darling! my darling! I will not doubt you.”

She had not heard once from him since she had left London, a long time ago now. He knew that she had been ill; for in one of his occasional epistles Lord Okehampton had mentioned to her that Vandeleur, who was with them, was sorry to hear of her illness; but still he did not write.

The suspense—the agony of waiting—known only to those who have so suffered—became unbearable. Verily her heart was sick with hope deferred as morning after morning came, and brought no sign from him; and at last she herself wrote—a fond, foolish, loving letter.

The answer was some days coming, but it was worth waiting for such a thick letter she thought, as she put it beneath her pillow. It

was too precious a document to be read while her maid was in the room. With a beating heart she at last opened it.

Two hours passed, and Jones marvelled that she had not been rung for, and receiving no answer to her knock, she opened the door. Her mistress was still in bed, and on being told that it was eleven o'clock, she said that she would get up—that her head ached—that she was not very well.

Jones was curious, and fidgeted about the room till Eveline was nearly beside herself, but she said very quietly, "That will do, thank you. I will get up directly."

When Eveline saw her face in the glass, she started at the reflection which met her eyes—swollen—discoloured—disfigured almost beyond recognition. She bathed it with cold water—laid wet handkerchiefs on it—did everything that she could think of to remove some of the terrible traces before her maid should see her. Eveline had received but that one letter—doubtless Jones knew Vandeleur's writing—and would speculate accordingly. However, when at last she rang, save that she looked very ill, there was nought to be remarked.

"I shall go home to-day, Jones. Find out

when the next train goes ; and if you can be ready for it, do." She spoke very quietly.

"Do we go through town, ma'am?" asked Jones, trying to catch her mistress's face in the glass, but Eveline had swung it up out of the line of reflection.

"No, by Bristol. Have you not a sister who wants a place? I hear that Mrs. Vandeleur is parting with her maid," said Mrs. Greville, presently.

"I don't think my sister would take it. I hear it is not a comfortable place at all," said Jones, putting the last touch to Eveline's head.

"As you please. Give me my hat and jacket—I am going down to the beach. Send Thomas for me when it is time to go."

Eveline was so very calm that her maid's suspicions of something being wrong were lulled.

"I suppose she over-slep herself," soliloquised the abigail ; "but I do think she was crying, and lor ! to be sure ! so she have," she ejaculated, as she saw several pocket-handkerchiefs lying in the bath, where Eveline had thrown them to defy detection. "She thought to deceive me, did she? and to think a body should cry like that !" and she wrung out one

after another. "Well, for my part, I don't think all the men in the world are worth *that*," giving a vicious shake to the last one and hanging it out to dry. "It is a promiscuous thing to care for a man—specially a married one. Now I'll be bound there has been a row between them—that was his letter she got—and a good thing too, says I. Not that he's been much to see her this year—still if people knew what *I* know—well, it's not for servants to talk, and I have got a very good place. I think I'll have this *more*. His grace's steward says as how black do become me." And the abigail carefully laid the dress in the trunk.

Meanwhile Eveline had gone down to the beach, taking with her his letter to read again in the same spot where he had so often told her that he loved her, and that nothing on earth should ever change him. She was very calm now—she knew it all—it was the beginning of the end. They were henceforth to be nothing to each other—never to write—even in the most friendly terms—but to be as strangers. It was quite right, she knew that, but she sat with clasped hands, gazing on the dark blue sea, whose waves had spoken so tenderly to her but yesterday—repeating his

fond words as they chased each other to the shore, each one catching up the burden of the last one, ere its sweet echo had died away.

“Was it the same sea? Was it the same place?” She put her hand on her brow, and looked vacantly round, then listened with strained, pained attention. “What were the waves saying?”

“All is over—all is over”—as one broke upon another. Then came some smaller ones, seeming to whisper, “For ever—for ever.” Then a huge billow reared its foaming crest high in the air—“All is over—for *ever!*” and at the last word it thundered down on the shore, hissing and boiling as it hurried back to sea.

“Who had told her that waves came in threes? Was it so?” She would listen.

Again the same weary, cruel song. “Could it be the sea, or was she dreaming?” No, it was the sea—a sheet of sparkling glitter beneath an autumn sun—the very same sea that had echoed his words two years ago. “Was it only two years ago? Surely she had lost count of time. Had it all happened to herself? it was so long ago. Would those waves *never* be still?”

Wearily she rose and wearily toiled up the

cliff, to look at the fir-tree—their rendezvous during that fatal fortnight. With a lover's fond nonsense he had cut on the bark their initials, E. H., interlaced, with the date above, and below them the words—*Durante Vitâ*. How well she remembered half chiding him, as, with one arm round her, he memorialized their place of tryst! Was that a dream also? Her knees tottered ere she reached the spot. It was no dream—the tree stood there—the inscription untouched—a living falsehood!

She looked at it long and earnestly—put her arm round the tree, and pressed her soft lips to the rude bark.

“All is over for *ever*!” splashed the great wave, as it broke at the foot of the cliff.

CHAPTER VI.

“ *Macb.* Had I died an hour before this chance,
I had lived a blessed time ; for, from this instant,
There’s nothing serious in mortality :
All is but toys : renown, and grace, is dead,
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.”

MACBETH.

“ Month after month to bear this load,
And as a jade urged by whip and goad,
To drag life on—which like a heavy chain
Lengthens behind with many a link of pain,
And not to speak of my grief—O, not to dare
To give a human voice to my despair ;
But live, and move, and wretched thing ! smile on,
As if I never went aside to groan
And wear this mask of falsehood, even to those
Who are most dear.”

SHELLEY.

“ I CAN’T find missus down on the beach nowhere,” said Thomas to Jones ; “ are you sure she said the beach ?”

“ Of course I am, stoopid. I saw her go with my own eyes,” retorted Jones.

“Go and look for yourself, then,” said Thomas, huffed. “We shall lose the train if we don’t look sharp ; it’s better nor twenty mile to the station.”

The abigail tossed her head, and sallied forth to fetch her mistress. She looked up and down the long stretch of golden sand, but saw no sign of the white cambric dress and blue ribbons, in which she had arrayed her mistress that morning.

“Surely she’s never been and made away with herself,” thought Jones, looking out to sea in a vague dread of seeing floating on the billows something that ought not to be there.

“Well, who’s stoopid now ?” asked Thomas, who had followed.

Jones remembered the tear-bedewed handkerchiefs, and was too much alarmed to resent the footman’s “imperence,” as she would have termed it at another time, but she hurriedly bade him run up the beach one way, while she took the opposite direction. Her mistress might be sheltered from their sight by some rock. But no—she was not to be seen anywhere, and in much alarm they returned to the hotel to find that she had not come back in their absence. The only thing was to wait.

Two hours passed, and still no signs of her. The disquiet spread, and a search was instituted. A boy said that he had seen a lady "go up there," pointing to one of the pine woods. Hither they hurried, and found Eveline stretched at the foot of a tree.

She was neither a "corpse nor a suicide," as Jones shrieked on seeing her, but she was in a heavy swoon. They carried her back, and laid her on her bed, and sent for a doctor. At last they brought her round, but her head wandered.

"No, sir," said Jones, in answer to the doctor's inquiry if her mistress had received any shock; "my mistress is not strong, and has lately been ill. I find she went out without any breakfast. It's a hempty stummich sir, that's what it is," and Jones lowered her voice to impart this medical confidence. "If that lamb dies," said she to herself, "no one shall know the reason why; and it's my belief she will."

But grief does not kill so easily. She moaned and tossed, and muttered incoherently—chiefly in Italian, which no one understood—called piteously on "*madre mia*," or "Aunt Mary," or what was far more distressing, would laugh that unmeaning laugh of delirium—so

painful to her—and imagine herself a child again; now playing with Nero, or praying at the graves of Aunt Mary's children; but always the past—the happy past! No mention of her present misery. The over-strained mind seemed to have cast the agony from it.

A strong opiate was administered, and science conquering nature, she slept.

It was night when she woke—hazy and confused from the effect of laudanum—but in her right senses. Jones was working by the light of a shaded lamp; and in a dreamy way, Eveline wondered why she was there, and watched the rapid needle with the interest of a still stupefied brain for trivial matters. A moth next caught her attention, and she began counting how many times it would fling itself against the burning lamp. She got quite interested in her calculation, when Jones knocked the moth down. Then in a very faint voice Eveline called to her maid.

“What a nice sleep you have had. Are you feeling better?”

“Yes, she was very well. Were they at home? What o'clock was it? Why was she lying on her bed, dressed?” and then Jones got her to bed, and the doctor came again, and gave her more opiate and she slept till morn-

ing. And then by degrees memory came back, and as soon as she was left alone she got out of bed and tried to walk across the room to find the letter which she remembered having put in her pocket. But she could not stand, and when her maid returned she found her—a heap on the floor. She was fain to be lifted into bed again.

Presently the housemaid came in, and she told her to give her the gown. Thus she got her letter, which she had not dared ask her maid to find. She was too ill to read it then—she knew that; but she kept it under her pillow, passing the day in a state of dreamy languor—half sleep, half lethargy; and thus passed several days, till at last she was able to get up and be moved into her sitting-room. And then she read his letter again and again—scourging herself afresh each time—taking a fierce delight in paining herself.

He had returned her own letter and a long golden curl that he had severed from her head long ago—hence the bulk of his letter—which was very short, very hard, and very heartless. “As she was utterly unable to control herself, he must request that all communication end between them. It was better that

they should never meet, unless, indeed, she would learn to do so as a casual friend. He sincerely wished for her happiness, which he could not see was in any way marred—at all events by him.”

It was a terrible letter for her to receive, but when a man is tired of a *liaison*, he seldom cares what pain he inflicts on the woman he has ruined : the whole affair bores him, and he is glad to end it in the easiest way to himself. The utmost that a woman can hope for under such circumstances, is courtesy, and *that* she does not always meet with.

“Not marred my life! and to mock me with the hope of happiness!” thought she, bitterly, “as if I *could* be happy again! Had he only said that he felt our parting, I could better bear it. And to send back that curl as something too worthless to keep! My punishment has come very quickly. My God! my God! I cannot bear this!” and she rocked herself backwards and forwards like one racked with pain.

“If I could only die! Why did they not let me die?—why did they not leave me under that tree? *Durante vitâ!* What a mockery! My darling, my darling, why have you cast me from you?”

Bankrupt in honour, religion, love, and hope, she no longer disputed Dante's wisdom, but shrunk from going near the places which she had visited with *him*. The past was agony. The future—even worse. To one spot alone did she return the very first day that her trembling limbs would bear her; and that was to the old trysting-place, to cut that horrible falsehood from the fir-tree; and on her way home she met—Miss Wilson!

Miss Wilson was quite delighted to see her, and—"he! he! he!—had she heard of Mr. Vandeleur's tremendous flirtation with Mrs. Herbert—an old flame she believed—who had returned last spring after three years' absence in America?"

"I used to think," she continued, "that he was smitten with *you*; but—he! he! he!—gentlemen are so fickle. I am so sorry for my poor friend, Mrs. Vandeleur—such an angel! for really his devotion to Mrs. Herbert is quite outrageous. She was his first, and I believe his *only* love—though of course he has amused himself with others—gentlemen *will*, you know, if ladies allow it. But with *such* a wife as *he* has, it really is too bad."

Bon sang ne peut mentir. The Gaveston

motto. Nor by sign nor word did Eveline betray that the dagger had driven home—stabbed her to the quick. Very calmly did she answer.

“Mrs. Herbert? A very pretty brunette? Mr. Vandeleur introduced her to me. A piquante *égayée* little woman, very charming. I remember her perfectly. But do you know, Miss Wilson, I don’t think it is quite nice to retail gossip of your friend’s husband. I should hardly think that Mrs. Vandeleur would appreciate such candour,” and Eveline looked at her straight in the face.

“Oh! I thought that, as you and Mr. Vandeleur were *once* such great friends, it might interest you.”

“Mr. Vandeleur and I *are* great friends; but I do not see in what way his flirtations affect me,” and again did she look Miss Wilson steadily and inquiringly in the face.

Eveline had not blenched nor quivered in the sight of her enemy, though a dull, heavy faintness was stealing over her, as if all the blood were leaving her brain and curdling about her heart; but she rallied her forces, and very quietly bidding Miss Wilson good morning, re-entered the hotel.

But when she was alone? Heigho! this is

a weary world to those who try to make their own heaven in it.

Cast aside for another woman ! Made a plaything of in that woman's absence ! If he had parted with her from a sense of right—from a growing love for his wife—she could have borne it—ay ! and loved him all the more for it ; for a woman's love, left to itself, is a very pure feeling. But to be thus outraged was what a passionate-hearted woman like Eveline Greville could not endure without a burst of bitter feeling. She turned on the aggressor and resented the blow in an angry, reproachful letter—far better left alone. What does a woman expect to gain by upbraiding a man to whom she has ceased to be the all in all ? Does she think to fan into life the cold ashes of a burnt-out love ? Methinks *that* was a task *not* allotted by the gods to the Herculean giant.

But we are of the earth, earthy ; and act according to our light ; and in the passion of the moment Eveline wrote, and trusting the letter to no one, sallied forth and posted it herself ; but no sooner did she see it disappear in the letter-box, than an awful feeling came over her—what if Miss Wilson's story had been a pure fabrication ? What if Vandeleur

were striving after good, and with breaking heart himself had been acting, as she thought, cruelly to her, only for their mutual welfare? What if this were so? She, who ought to be—who would be—the first to aid him in his search for the lost track, had bitterly reproached him!

The thought was so horrible that straightway she went into the post-office and demanded back her letter. But there is no open sesame to the letter-box. Nor entreaties nor gold could move the Cerberus who kept guard over it. In vain she said that she had put a wrong letter in the envelope. If so, the man said the mistake would doubtless be rectified at the General Post-Office, but it was out of his power to give back a letter that had been posted.

There was no help for it—that letter must go—and exhausted by her long walk, she called a fly and drove back to her hotel.

Next day she went back to Wales, but although the glass-houses were empty—although her beautiful gardens already showed the change of hands—she scarcely noted it. Her heart was very sick, and what mattered a flower more or less, where all was a dreary waste? How touchingly does Lytton describe

that weariness of heart which befalls one no longer loved!—

“The occupations of the world are suddenly made stale and barren to us—the social diversions, in themselves so tame, had had their charm when we could talk them over with another. It was sympathy which made them sweet—the sympathy withdrawn, they are nothing—worse than nothing. The talk becomes a tinkling cymbal, and society a gallery of pictures.”

Alone—with no human tie—with no positive duty to which she was compelled to rouse herself—with none on whom to lavish the great tide of love that had been cast back upon her—her days became a dull, listless, hopeless blank, broken only by her anxiety respecting the answer to her last letter—an answer which came at last, and one that was hard to her. He said that every word he wrote was truth—it might be so—but she felt that the spirit of truth was lacking, albeit the facts he stated might be true. “She spoke of her misery and wrecked life,” he wrote; “he did not see the necessity of either; but whatever she felt, or imagined she felt—for he gave a great margin for rhapsody and wounded vanity—he must remind E...

that she had brought all on herself. In those early days, had she only forbidden him her presence, he should have obeyed her. But far from that, she had, as far as he could see, encouraged him in every way—and it was scarcely fair to blame him now. However, he would forgive her, and if he had done her any wrong he would ask the same of her. He must beg her not to write again, for any letters from her would henceforth be returned unopened. He could not conclude his letter without saying how shocked he felt at her want of delicacy and propriety in connecting his name with that of any lady—a matter, moreover, of no earthly moment to her. He again repeated that if he had done her any wrong he was sincerely sorry for it.”

If he had done her any wrong? *If!* Had he not blighted her life?—wrecked her happiness?—destroyed her purity, her holiness, her religion? *If!* Oh! what are men made of? Are they human? Could he not have shown her some generosity—some gratitude—for the wealth of love which she had lavished on him? But to be told in almost as many words that his feeling for her had been a mere passing fancy, which one word from her would have repressed—that her heart’s agony was “wounded vanity,” was too much.

Reader, this is no fictitious letter, but one which fell, with many others, into my hands several years later.

“Oh ! kill me with thy weapon, not with words !
My heart can better brook thy dagger’s point !”

But Eveline had to brook them, as women have had to brook before—and will have to brook again—as often as they forget One above for one below.

Oh ! my sisters ! believe me, this is the ending—sooner or later—of all unholy love. *Our* disgrace — *our* dishonour — *our* punishment, not the man’s. The dream may endure for a longer or a shorter span, but from the moment that a woman sacrifices herself for the man she loves, her Nemesis is on her track ; and no savage on the war-path ever traced his victim to a more certain doom.

Too crushed to care—too weak to analyse, Eveline bowed her head, feeling that what he said was false ; but what mattered to her anything now ?

What though she had warned him from the first of the dangers of the sea through which he had promised to steer their bark in safety ?

What though she had told him of the maelstrom which she saw was close at hand ?

What though she had fled from the approaching danger?

Had he not known it all along? Had he not known that if he left her alone, the fair, true wind would have wafted her safely to port? Yes, he had known it; but selfishness had prevailed, and he had taken the navigation of the bark into his own hands, bidding her trust to him and be of good cheer; and he had steered straight into the whirlpool!—he, to rise unharmed—she, to come to the surface a crushed and mangled ruin. And now he taunted her for shipwrecking herself!—told her that the anguish of being cast torn—bleeding—mangled—on to the sharp, jagged rocks, was mere wounded vanity!

The blast was very bitter, and she had no shelter from it—her religion was gone; and like many another, she could neither grasp a whole falsehood, nor a whole truth. While she still trembled at the terrors of a hell, she had lost faith in Divine mercy, and in the Redemption which has purchased pardon for all sin.

Gloom — desolation — misery everywhere. The zest had gone out of her life—her self-esteem was abased—and night, with all its darkness, was closing round her soul.

Sometimes would she throw herself on ground hallowed by his step—press her cheek—her lips—to the dear spot, and weep as if her heart would break. Often would she wander by the river side, and, looking into the dark pools, think of the rest that lay beneath those depths, and ask herself why not end all her woes in that one plunge?

But one plunge! 'Twould be quickly over—

“Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
Of those, that lawless and incertain thoughts
Imagine howling!—'tis too horrible!
The weariest and most loathed worldly life,
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.”

And shuddering, she would draw back from the awful temptation—drag her weary steps home again, and pray for death. And because such prayer was unanswered, she said in her heart, “There is no God.”

Wearily passed the days; for if grief does

not kill with one fell stroke, the sufferer must live through it, and, like the tanned galley-slave, he

“Gets accustomed to sad misery.
Necessity makes him suffer constantly,
And custom makes it easy.”

It is not the galley-slave alone who is chained to his daily oar. Others have their oars to pull—their chains to carry; but they learn to muffle the former, and to bear the latter without their clanking. Let no one suspect the shame—the misery! Forbid it, decency! Laugh, dance, sing—and though the chain eat into the very vitals, cover up the festering sore—hide it from all eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

“De la tige detachée, pauvre feuille deséchée, où vas tu ?
Je n'en sais rien, je vais où le vent me mène.”

“Do you know, I hear that nice Mrs. Greville has lost all her money ?” said Mr. Falconer, a man looking years older than his age, and who, absorbed in his botanical and entomological researches, rarely heard, saw, or remembered anything not connected with his own peculiar studies.

“Do you know that Queen Anne is dead ?” laughed his wife, looking up from the sheet of paper onto which she was gumming what she irreverently termed a dry weed. “You dear old thing, that happened ages ago.”

“Did it really ?” he innocently asked. “I certainly thought that I heard it yesterday, and I fully purposed imparting the knowledge to you, but Mrs. St. John brought me a rare specimen of the salpichroa, and I was so absorbed in perusing its history that it en-

tirely escaped my memory to inform you of this sad intelligence."

"It is very sad," said his wife, "and I thought, if it would not disturb you, we would ask her to pay us a visit."

"By all means ask her. I do not imagine that she will interfere with my herbal, and I am sure that I shall not interfere with her."

"Lady Gaveston writes me that she has been very ill," said Mrs. Falconer, rather vague in her nominatives.

"I grieve to hear it. She appeared to me a most blooming young woman when last I had the pleasure of seeing her with her handsome little boy."

Mrs. Falconer laughed. "Mrs. Greville has been ill, not Lady Gaveston; *she* was here only yesterday. Will that do?" and she handed him the "weed," neatly gummed and arranged.

"Admirably. It is ever a matter for marvelling to me how it is that, deftly as you arrange those specimens, you can never recollect their proper names. Now, to me it is far easier to recollect *coccus cacti* than 'a thing with two tails,' or *equisetum scirpoides*, than 'a thing with spikes;' but I suppose this is a question of habit."

"Entirely, dear," responded his wife. "Give

me that thing with the twirligig, I will do it for you."

"Most remarkable," said Mr. Falconer.

"To return to Mrs. Greville. What do you think of asking her to come with us to Italy?"

"I think that it would be wiser to wait till she comes here, when we could mutually judge how such an arrangement would suit," said Mr. Falconer, with a common sense which one would not have expected from him.

So Mrs. Greville was asked, and, thankful for any change, went to the Falconers. Her pale, thin face and her quiet subdued manner so touched her hosts, that liking soon ripened into affection, and the gentle, patient attention which she gave to Mr. Falconer's discourses on *Cryptogamiæ Pentandriæ*, &c., quite won his heart; and when he found that she remembered the right names of his specimens, he was charmed, and more than seconded his wife's wish for her to accompany them abroad.

Beaumanoir was within a drive, and Lady Okehampton came over to try and persuade Eveline by word of mouth to do what she had been unsuccessful in effecting by letter, and that was to spend Christmas-time with them.

"We shall not have Pamela," said Lady Okehampton, "the Pierreponts won't part with her this Christmas, but I hope we shall

have the Vandeleurs. I will not have a tree ; we had enough of that last year—poor little Helen!—but you will come to us? Okehampton desired me to say that if I were not successful, he should come and fetch you himself.”

Eveline gasped at the mere thought of Vandeleur being so near her. She earnestly besought Lady Okehampton not to think her ungrateful and unkind, but that she was utterly unfit for anything like society ; even this quiet visit to the Falconers was almost too much for her, and she already felt the necessity of going home to recruit, ere starting for Italy, which they were to do early in January ; and so alarmingly ill did she look as she spoke, that with many kind, motherly injunctions, Lady Okehampton yielded, and promised to make her peace with her husband. “He is sure to ride over to-morrow after church to see you,” she added.

Eveline’s feelings towards Vandeleur were a strange mixture. The old bitter sense of degradation and sin, which his caresses had lulled for a time, was now called into terrible life by his desertion and insults. The stern, uncompromising truth, divested of the glamour of his love, stood revealed in all its horrible nakedness.

Verily had Lady Gaveston’s warning come

to pass. Disgrace, dishonour, and desertion had overtaken her, even as her friend had said. And yet, bowed down with shame as she was, and shrinking in horror from the man as she did, still she loved him ; for truly with a woman it is, as the poet sings,

“ Love is love for evermore,”

and when it roots itself into the heart by its every fibre, it is a plant that refuses to be torn up.

In his last letter he had outraged every feeling ; he had said that he had never really loved her, and he had shamefully hinted at her deep unselfish love. This letter, which she always kept about her, she would study again and again so as to scourge from her heart anything approaching forgiveness or gentleness to him who had so cruelly insulted her, and thus keep alive the bitter, unforgiving Gaves-ton blood.

If she could but still the gnawing fang of conscience ! If she could but wipe out the last two years !

“ Can man by no means creep out of himself,
And leave the slough of viperous grief behind ?”

No. There are no waters of Lethe—no fabled stream—in which to drown a sorrow conceived in sin.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ This, this has thrown a serpent to my heart
While it o’erflowed with tenderness, with joy,
With all the sweetness of exulting love,
Now naught but gall is there and burning pain.”
THOMSON.

I WILL not dwell on the journey to Italy, nor on the time spent in that lovely country.

We all know Rome, Naples, Florence, and the usual routine of life there ; suffice it then to say, that in the hope of stifling her misery, and crushing from her heart every vestige of the miserable love she felt for Vandeleur, Mrs. Greville plunged into every gaiety that was readily offered to the beautiful Englishwoman who was so nearly related to themselves—for she chiefly affected Italian society—and all those who had known her formerly gladly welcomed her back, and *i cugini*

who were at her feet might be counted by the score.

When the heats began she and the Falconers wandered northwards to the lakes. Most of us are familiar with those lovely shores, with their luxuriant growth of myrtle, orange-trees, magnolias, and all the wealth of southern vegetation—the bower of nightingales—and we can, most of us, shut our eyes and conjure back the glorious outline of the purple mountains around the sapphire lakes of Maggiore, Guarda, Como, so I will not maim their beauties, which need an artist's hand and a poet's pen to do them justice, but will only say that Eveline Greville recovered her health and apparently her spirits, and when she returned to England in the following September, few would have recognised the Eveline of the year before in the haughty, reckless, careless woman who swept into the halls of her ancestors on a visit to the Gaves-ton, who, as usual, were at the Abbey during the Pierreponts' absence in Scotland.

She and Pamela seemed to have changed characters. While the latter had bloomed into all the sweetness and gentleness so becoming a wife and a mother, the former had

not only become bitter and sarcastic, but had ceased to be "the credulous enthusiast of good." The "pillars of her moral world" had been shaken by a terrible earthquake, and her faith in her fellow-creatures was shattered.

Both these changes were the natural results of certain causes. The one was walking on the high-road that is paved with honour, rectitude, and high principle ; and blessed by all the dearest affections that embellish a woman's life, the noblest qualities of her nature had been called into blossom, and had fructified bountifully. The other, on the contrary, had taken a wrong turning, and, after wandering down a flowery path, found herself lost in a thicket, where sharp-set thorns and thistles had lacerated her so cruelly that the pain could not be forgotten, and it made her distrustful of every flower, lest a lurking thorn should be hidden behind it to tear her afresh.

Lord Gaveston had no longer any reason to complain of her humility—but it was not pride that usurped the place—it was the hardening of an embittered heart. She knew that a mine was beneath her feet which might explode at any moment, at a word from Vandeleur—and she deemed him base enough to betray her if it

suited him so to do—but with the reckless defiance of danger that characterises the miner who smokes amidst the gaseous exhalations of a coal-pit, did she defy society.

“Do you ever hear how little Helen Vandeleur is?” asked Eveline, one day, as she and Lady Gaveston sat together.

“Mrs. Vandeleur and I do not correspond, said Pamela, “but the last that I heard, through my mother, was that the child was very delicate. Thank Heaven my boy is strong and healthy.”

“And mischievous,” added Eveline, pointing to Master Gaveston, who was intent on cutting up the sock he had pulled off.

“Me lite tutting, mamma,” lisped the child, lifting his cherub face, with a full certainty of approval, to his mother.

Eveline laughed. “A veritable type of your sex, my dear. You glory in the evil you do. Now those beautiful vandykes have ruined the sock, and I dare say you think it none the worse—rather the better. You are a true man, my boy.”

“Nay, the child knew not that he was doing harm,” said Pamela, kneeling down and replacing the remnant of a sock on the pink, dimpled foot that lay crossed on his fat little

knee. "We won't cut up our socks, Algy, we will cut up paper. See, here is a capital piece."

"Tapital," responded the contented child.

"I suppose if that had been a little Vandeleur, it would have been whipped and sent to bed for a month," suggested Eveline.

"Have you seen anything of the Vandeleurs since your return?" asked Pamela.

"No," replied the other, carelessly, "I have not seen either since last year in town."

"Do you like *her*?" said Pamela.

"My dear Pam, what a question! Do *you*? Does anybody? Though, to say the truth, I know very little of her, and care very little about her one way or the other."

"You liked him?" said Pamela, interrogatively. "Many people are infatuated about him—my father and mother for instance."

"People who only know him superficially are sure to like him," replied Mrs. Greville, "for his manner in society is unimpeachable, with that *je ne sais quoi de caressant* which we women delight in. But I remember that you never concurred in the universal admiration. You were always a keen reader of character. He is a selfish man, with anything but that depth of feeling I once credited him with."

"You have, I see, veered round to my feel-

ing about him. Gaveston used to swear by him, but I don't think that he cares so much about him now."

"Who's that I don't care about?" said her husband, walking into her boudoir, fresh from the heather—where the grouse had felt his unerring aim—and with the manner of a man who knows that he is always welcome.

A pang stabbed Eveline as she saw the glad look with which wife and child sprang forward to meet him. Unobserved she left the room.

"And such might have been my lot," said she, bitterly. "It was a miserable hour for me when we two met. God help me!" She covered her face with her hands, and gave a gasping sob, but suddenly starting, as though stung by a serpent, she drew forth the letter that rarely left her, and after perusing it, exclaimed; "Could I only inflict on him a tithe of what he has made me suffer! but he has no more feeling than that chair. Vanity—vanity is *his* heel—his one vulnerable spot; and if I cannot wound his heart—his *heart*!—Psha!—I can touch his vanity, and I will make it bleed again!"

Pamela was greatly distressed at the cruel change in her friend; one that seemed, even as she contemplated it, too monstrous to be

true, a frightful abortion of nature. She knew that Eveline and Vandeleur were not on good terms, or rather that the infatuation of the former regarding him had died away, but from the terrible truth she was as far as from supposing that the sun went round the earth; and in vain she sought an answer to the enigma that puzzled her, for she never heard Eveline say any bitter word against Vandeleur, which would perhaps have given her some suspicion of the truth; but no, Mrs. Greville spoke of him with perfect indifference, acknowledged that she had at one time over-rated him but that now she saw that Pamela's view of his character was the true one, namely, that of a pleasant man in society, but at heart a selfish *flaneur*.

"How changed you are," said Lady Gaveston to her, one day, "you who used to be so fearful of hurting other people's feelings, now delight in trampling on them, and then laugh to see them writhe. Really you do flirt in the most outrageous way."

"Man, my dear," said Eveline, contemptuously, "you don't mean to say you think *that* feels? They are but children of a larger growth, crying for the moon, simply because she is out of reach. If they could attain her, she would lose her value, and they would cry for a star.

It is their nature, my dear, and as long as they know that I am as unattainable as a fixed star, so long will they strive to reach me. *Ils en seront quittes pour leurs peines.*"

"You used not to talk nor think in this way, formerly," said Pamela, almost wistfully.

"Possibly not ; I used to live in a 'bright beaming world of my own,' which I peopled with my own puppets, making them think, and feel, and act according to my own fancies. I am better instructed now, for I have seen the world, not as I believed it, but as it really is, and mankind as it is. Men are not the noble, chivalrous beings that I imagined them, but human—very human. You used to tell me that a season or two in London would open my eyes. You were right. The scales have been taken off, and I see now."

"Not truly. You are as blind now to good, as formerly you were to evil. You are changed, Eveline, and not for the better."

"Developed, Pamela," replied the other, somewhat touched at the sad tone of her friend's voice. "There is a theory that our characters never change, only unfold ; and that is what has happened to me ; and my father's blood, that a life of serenity kept dormant, has simply come to life. Ah ! Master Algy," she added, as the boy rushed

into the room, "come here, my heir of all the Pierreponts"—the boy was on her lap in a moment—"what would you do if anybody knocked me down and behaved badly to me?"

"I'd till him!" cried the child, looking up with blazing eyes.

"Gaveston! Pamela; Gaveston all over!" laughed Eveline. "Do you love me, Algy?" she asked, in her old, loving tones, for a child's affection seemed to be the only one in which she believed, and which was precious to her. "There is truth there, Pamela," she said, returning the child's caress.

"I should hope so," was Pamela's answer, "and equal truth in his father's love for me. It is the truth and nobility of Gaveston's character that made me see human nature as it is—a great deal of good preponderating over some evil. In the false and foolish expectation of finding perfection in others, we too often fall into the very faults which we so bitterly condemn."

"Their own defect, invisible to them,
Seen in another they at once condemn;
And though self-idolized in every case,
Hate their likeness in a brother's face,"

quoted Eveline, laughing. "By the way, where is your brother?" and the conversation changed.

CHAPTER IX.

"Away, away, my early dream ;
Remembrance never must awake.
Oh ! where is Lethe's fabled stream ?
My foolish heart, be still, or break !"

BYRON.

"Be stirring as the time, be fire with fire ;
Threaten the threatener."

KING JOHN.

SHORTLY after the above conversation, Eveline went to Rossmoor. She accepted all invitations now, not in the old feeling of affection that formerly prompted her, but partly that, with her knowledge of the world, she was quite aware of the powerful protection that the friendship of the great gives against such an exposure as that which she dreaded daily more and more. She had nothing now to compensate for it—nothing to make up for the loss of her fair name, and one word would blow that trembling edifice to the winds.

But as for the tender, clinging affection which she formerly felt for her friends, it was gone from her—not an uncommon result of a bitter treason in a loving, trustful nature; and is there not a double treason in a love that begins with and ends in treachery?

“If the one we so worshipped and so served—to whom we have offered countless daily offerings—whom we put in our heart of hearts—against whom, if a world hinted, we had braved a world—if *this one* has deserted us, *who* then can be faithful?”

But if women allow themselves to fall in love with married men, what can they expect but bitter retribution?

It was on a cold October day that she was travelling to Rossmoor, and at one of the junctions whom should she see but Mr. and Mrs. Vandeleur on the platform! Hastily calling to the guard, she slipped five shillings in his hand, bidding him on no account to let any one enter her carriage. The mere sight of Vandeleur, whom she had not seen for sixteen months, had power thus to affect her! Where was her hatred and contempt? Alas! poor human nature!

Could they be going to Rossmoor? Surely not. Yet she watched at every station at

which they stopped, without seeing any signs of her fellow-travellers getting out. At last, after hours of suspense, Rossmoor station came in sight, and the train slackened speed. She saw Vandeleur's head thrust out of the window. Evidently he was going to get out here! Good heavens! what could she do? She would have to meet him, unless—unless what?—and, as the train stopped, a more formidable probability occurred to her. The duke always sent to meet his guests, and should no one but those three be coming by that train, he would hardly send two carriages; to drive with the Vandeleurs was out of the question; equally so was her going in the break with the servants, and she feared to undertake a walk of four miles—her strength was not what it was. An escape out of her difficulties suddenly occurred to her. The duke's footman was on the platform; her quick eye saw him in a moment, and she beckoned to him. "Yes, his Grace had sent the carriage for her, and for Mr. and Mrs. Vandeleur, who were expected by the same train."

Hastily tearing a leaf from her pocket-book, she scribbled two lines to the duchess, and asked the footman to see after her maid and

luggage, as she herself was going on a little farther, and would take a fly back. She called her maid, spoke a few words to her, and the train slowly moved away. With a feeling of intense relief she leant back, and watched Vandeleur and his wife get into an open carriage and drive off. Eveline breathed again. The next station was but four or five miles farther on, and what was a ten-mile drive in a fly? Had she not escaped the awful alternative of driving with Mr. and Mrs. Vandeleur? Good heavens! it made her sick to think of the danger that she had escaped. Meet Vandeleur at Rossmoor she must, but she would have time, ere she reached it, to brace herself for the ordeal; and, as the train carried her on, she recovered her equanimity.

It was very wicked of her, but I am obliged to confess that a sense of satisfaction came over her, as she recalled the vision of Mrs. Vandeleur in the barouche beside her husband, waiting while the footman gave some orders at the station.

She was blue and nipped with the cold, and the keen Scotch air had imparted a good deal more colour to the tip of her nose than is quite becoming that feature—she looked very cross—her bonnet was awry—and altogether

she had a crumpled, dusty, not to say shabby, appearance.

With pardonable, or unpardonable, vanity—as the sex of my reader will determine—Mrs. Greville took the mirror out of her travelling bag to inspect her own face. It was a trifle pale, doubtless from the agitation, but in perfect order—the dainty little nose was white as alabaster—a charming Parisian bonnet sat straight on the golden head, from which escaped a curl or two onto the sable-trimmed seal-skin jacket—an irreproachable necktie of marvellous Malines lace—and gloves, which, if dark, were fresh, and fitted so closely, that the contour of each oval nail was well defined; and, as she smoothed her *bien gantées* little hands, she remembered having remarked on Mrs. Vandeleur's gaunt fingers gloves whose tender hue was ill adapted for, and had not been improved by, railway travelling.

The inspection was gratifying, the contrast,—as regarded herself—was pleasing, and Mrs. Greville got into her fly in a very good humour, and bent on conquest. She knew the man she had to deal with, and felt nearly sure that she could pique him, not only out of his indifference, but into his old admiration for her; and, once at her feet again, *her* day

of triumph would come ! She could lure him there—or else the power of beauty over man had lost its spell—and then she would trample on him with all the scorn and contempt she felt !

So lost in her speculations was she, that the long, tedious drive came to an end sooner than she could have conceived possible ; and finding that the duchess had already gone to her room, she repaired there to greet her and make her excuses.

The abigail found her mistress hard to please that evening ; but, when the toilette was ended, she confessed that the result was perfect. The emerald-green satin was brilliant enough to eclipse every other dress in the room, and to make it impossible to overlook the wearer ; but so softened with Brussels point wherever it touched the fair skin, or could throw any reflection on it, that the most fastidious could not call it glaring. A green enamel comb, sparkling with diamonds, looped up her golden hair—which had not lost one particle of its sheen or glory—and diamonds sparkled on her brow, neck, and perfectly moulded arms. Excitement had, as usual, brought the bright hectic spot to her cheek, lighting up her dark blue eyes with

rare brilliancy. Never had she looked more splendidly beautiful.

The Vandeleurs were not in the room when she entered, and she wondered whether they knew of her being there—she hoped not; and her wish was gratified, for she shortly after had the satisfaction of seeing him start on perceiving her.

His first feeling was one of undoubted annoyance. The man's vanity made him sure that she still loved him, and he dreaded a repetition of scenes and reproaches. The best thing, he thought, would be to avoid her, for the gentle, timid Eveline would, he knew, bow to his decree; a look, a word from him would control her. But he had only known the Eveline loved and adored by him, whereas the Eveline who stood there was a slighted, insulted woman, with all the blood of her haughty race—English and Italian—boiling in her veins. She was more than a match for him now. He thought she had not perceived him, but she had—and saw him even then, watching her from amidst a group of men in another part of the room. He had tired of her—he had made no secret of it to himself; but he had thought of her as sad, sorrowful, pining; and behold, she was look-

ing radiant with youth, health, happiness, and in greater beauty than he had ever seen her, talking and laughing with half-a-dozen men who were all eager for a smile, and flirting most outrageously with her old lover, Lord Plantagenet. Vandeleur was piqued.

When she went into dinner on Lord Plantagenet's arm, she passed so near to Vandeleur as to brush him with her magnificent, flowing garments. She raised her eyebrows with just so much surprise as to be slightly impertinent, for she knew that it had been rather a sore point with him that the Montserrats had never asked him to Rossmoor.

"*You* here? How is Mrs. Vandeleur, and my little friend Helen?"

But careless of an answer, she turned with a bewitching smile to listen to something that her cavalier bent his head to speak.

Vandeleur was stung. This, his first invitation to Rossmoor, had been obtained with some difficulty—though of this Eveline was ignorant—and the slight, almost imperceptible impertinence in her recognition, led him to believe that she was aware of how the invitation had been procured; and his vanity was further wounded by perceiving the complete indifference with which she met him—unex-

pectedly, too, as he thought—after nearly eighteen months' absence ! It was mortifying, especially as, when he did think of her, his imagination had painted her in a very different aspect. He sat nearly opposite her at dinner, and found himself continually watching the brilliant, beautiful woman, who, now giving her undivided attention to Lord Plantagenet, now keeping up a sparkling conversation with as many as could hear on either side of her, was the nucleus of a small coterie in which interest and fun never flagged. Apparently oblivious of his presence, not a movement of his escaped her, and when, wishing to join in the fun and laughter opposite him, he addressed some words to Plantagenet, Eveline, instead of listening to him, was absorbed in the conversation of her other neighbour. Nor during the remainder of the evening could he flatter himself that he had excited in her the smallest interest. Had her manner been distant, constrained, cold—*anything* but that utter indifference—it would have been less galling, but she might have drank of the waters of Lethe for any feeling that she evinced as far as he was concerned.

Lord Hurstmonceaux was at Rossmoor

with his wife, and this latter, who thought the place too ducal and solemn to be quite amusing, was charmed with Mrs. Greville, who did her best to captivate her. When the men came into the drawing-room after dinner, Eveline was still the centre of a delightful coterie. Fun, laughter, anecdotes, repartee followed each other in quick succession, and the little group was speedily increased by several men. Vandeleur heard her silvery laugh—so low, yet so pure and musical that it rose above the din of voices—saw the universal admiration which she excited, and—was jealous!

He joined the group round the sofa, going behind Eveline with the malicious intention of startling her into something like feeling for himself.

But a woman, with all her senses on the rack, was not likely to be deceived by so paltry an ambuscade. She had *felt* him approach.

She was telling an anecdote, and mimicking the actors thereof so inimitably, that all who knew them were convulsed with laughter.

“I was not aware that you possessed that amusing but very dangerous talent,” said he, suddenly, his suppressed vexation giving a

tone of censorship to his voice, which Mrs. Greville was not likely to appreciate.

"There are more things in this world than are dreamt of in *your* philosophy," she replied, quietly looking round at him with a careless glance.

There was a slight laugh.

"I congratulate you on your good spirits, Mrs. Greville," he next said, and betraying, as he spoke, his own mortification.

"Why should I not have good spirits ?

'The greatness that would make us grave,

Is but an empty thing.

What more would mortals have ?

The cheerful man's a king ;'

and, my lords and gentlemen, that's all my dowry now."

She spoke the last words so quaintly, raising his eyebrows, and shaking her head with such comic demand for sympathy, that it was irresistible. Vandeleur felt that the laugh was against him, and, very sore, he turned away from where he could not help perceiving that he had been regarded in the light of a disagreeable intruder—he, the fascinating Vandeleur, whose presence women had always hailed with so much pleasure ! It was very mortifying.

Eveline saw that he was hurt, and, like the woman she was, longed to throw her arms round him and implore his forgiveness—so incomprehensible is our nature. But remembering the letter—her talisman—she hardened at once.

An hour later and she—the woman whose sallies and fun had amused the whole company—was crouching over her bedroom fire, with white and haggard face. But no mortal fire could warm the inward chill that made her shiver from head to foot. A few tears gathered slowly in her eyes, and rolled down her cheeks, but starting up, she used her moral styptic, which speedily dried her tears; and having thus refreshed her memory and hardened her heart, she went to bed.

CHAPTER X.

“Thou shalt not break yet, heart, nor shall (he) know
My inward torment by my outward show.
To let (him) see my weakness were too base ;
Dissembled quiet, sit upon my face !”

DRYDEN.

WHEN Vandeleur's short-lived passion began to die away, he had intended falling into an easy, light friendship with his victim ; but when he saw that the vehemence of her feelings would never permit of this, he hesitated not one moment in trampling on the heart that he had taken such pains to win. Self-preservation is said to be the first law of nature. If it be so, he was no exception to the rule ; for no sooner did he begin to be “bored” by Eveline's tears, which reproached him, than he cast her from him with cruel, insulting words, asking himself “why the deuce women could not be reasonable.”

Is a woman ever reasonable—in that sense of the word—after a first fault? Can a woman not wholly demoralized ever accept from her *ci-devant* lover the easy intercourse that he would like? I fancy not; for unless she is blinded by his love, she can only feel shame and pain in meeting one to whom she has given so much—to whom she has sacrificed all hope of earthly happiness; for, rightly or wrongly—to herself—her only shadow of excuse is fidelity to him—the betrayer.

Now that Vandeleur saw Eveline more beautiful and fascinating than ever, commanding the admiration of all around, and temptingly out of his reach, it did not take long for him to persuade himself that his former conduct had been entirely the result of his anxiety for her welfare, and that he had made a great sacrifice for her sake, and he was deeply mortified to find how fruitless were all his endeavours to break down the calm, absolute indifference she now showed him. The tables were turned—and it was he who began to think of those past days with a vain longing that he could not repress.

Visitors at Rossmoor amused themselves as they felt inclined during the morning. There was shooting for the men, of course; and for

the ladies there were ponies, carriages, servants to obey all their behests, books, magazines and newspapers in abundance, but the duchess never "showed" till luncheon ; and unless a "high personage" (royalty being unnameable) graced the ducal mansion, she did not personally trouble herself with her guests until the afternoon, but spent her mornings in her boudoir, where Eveline was a privileged person.

The duchess was very fond of her ; and although no longer the same desirable *parti* for her son, she could not, now that Eveline was with her again, resuming the old caressing freedom with her—all the more fascinating that women were rather afraid of the duchess—she could not again help wishing to call her by the dear name of daughter—a blessing she had always pined for—and Plan's devotion, and Eveline's reception of it, were not lost on her.

One morning as they sat together, they were talking of Lady Hurstmonceaux, to whom the duchess gave a full meed of praise ; but it was evident that they did not, what is vulgarly termed "get on" together ; and there was another source of disappointment. Married for more than three years, the mar-

chioness had not done her duty by the ducal house, which for the first time saw itself in peril of failing in a direct heir—a fatal failure according to an old legend.

“Good luck shall fall
On Rossmoor Hall,
But none shall hail
If sons do fail.”

The marchioness was slightly in disgrace.

The duchess reverted to her second son, and to her regret at seeing him still unmarried.

“He is so happy and light-hearted,” said Eveline; “and it is full early for a man to take on himself the cares of married life.”

“The duke was younger when he married me.”

“But then there are few women like Gertrude Montserrat,” said Eveline, warmly.

“I, too, might say, that if there are few like the person named, there are *none* like Eveline Greville.”

“Ah! dear duchess, you do not know me. You only see the best side of me—you are so good yourself that you have the faculty of drawing out whatever is best and truest in others. Matrimony is not my vocation.

Fiancelles vont en selle, repentailles en croupe,
and I rather fancy that would be my fate.
Marriages—you know the Italian proverb—
sono non come si fanno, ma come riescono.”

“And yet I know no one, who, among her intimate friends, has so many examples of happy *ménages* as yourself. What makes you so bitter against marriage?”

“Not bitter, duchess—on the contrary; few people estimate its peace and happiness as highly as myself. Somewhat altering the sense in which the poet wrote, I fully agree that

“’Tis nature’s second sun
Causing a spring of virtues where he shines,
And brings forth the honourable fruits
Of valour, wit, virtue, and haughty thoughts,
Brave resolution and divine discourse.’”

“Thy voice doth discourse most excellent music,” said the duchess, “and with such high aspirations, you are not to be entreated?”

“If anything could entreat me, it would be the happiness of being your daughter; and if that magic is not potent enough, no man has a more powerful one. And now I must confess—for I know what has brought this conversation on the tapis—I have for the last few days flirted most shamefully with Lord

Plantagenet. I have no excuse to offer, except that I thought, and still think, that he takes it at its worth—a little *badinage*! and then he is so charming, and so like you, that I am very fond of him. Will you give me absolution?"

The duchess laughed, and passed her hand caressingly over Eveline's white brow, as she playfully knelt at her feet.

"I do not know that I would grant it so easily, had I not observed that you treat every man in the room much in the same way. And I am sorry to see it, Eveline. However harmless in itself, no woman can act as you are doing, with impunity. You are fond of proverbs—recollect this one: *I migliori alberi sono i piu battuti*."

Eveline's head sank down till it was hidden in her friend's lap. One of her greatest punishments was that of hearing herself extolled. Undeserved praise is ever the severest censure.

"Duchess," said Eveline, raising her saddened face, over which the tears were stealing, "your life has been too happy, and too even—God grant it may ever be so!—for you to know that it is easier to act a part entirely foreign to one's

nature, than simply to keep down a sorrow and be one's own natural self."

"It has been a most grievous loss," said the duchess, thinking of Eveline's fortune, "and you have borne it so nobly, that no one has a right to find fault with you for bearing it in your own way; but I am jealous of my friend being misinterpreted."

The duchess kissed her as she spoke, and Eveline fairly broke down.

Meanwhile Vandeleur was chewing the irritating cud of suspense. He wanted to see Eveline, and for that purpose had stayed at home, not aware that her mornings were invariably spent with the duchess. The hours slipped by—he grew more restless, and for about the tenth time his wife looked up from her book with cold surprise to ask him what was the matter.

Whether she saw anything to rouse her just indignation, her husband never knew; but he saw that ever since they had been at Rossmoor, her manner to him, indeed to every one, was more repelling than usual. Cold, distant, taking no interest in anything or any one, Mrs. Vandeleur was shunned and dreaded by all the guests.

Her position was very sad and very hard,

though it must be acknowledged that she had brought it on herself. Eleven or twelve years of this discipline had accustomed Vandeleur to it, but the utter absence of conjugal tenderness did not serve to lessen the very dangerous feelings that were again arising for Eveline. He saw her bright, cheery, good-natured, and charming to everybody but him, and to him her perfect indifference served as a spur to thoughts which, as a married man, had been better left alone. The farther she receded from him, the more did he recall the sweet, loving sympathy which had once been his.

I don't think either of the Vandeleurs enjoyed their visit at Rossmoor. She said it was the dullest of dull houses, while he, once so popular with women, was now in a decided minority.

There was a regular Greville faction, to which belonged all the men, and every young, pretty, and pleasant woman there. She was the star that attracted them all, the centre of a sparkling, witty, good-humoured coterie; and I fancy that Mrs. Vandeleur was the only one there who thought Rossmoor dull. But then she was left out in the cold.

Vandeleur wandered from room to room, in

the hope of meeting Mrs. Greville, for he still flattered himself that if only he could speak to her, he could resume his old ascendancy over her. In vain he wandered. The morning slipped by—the luncheon gong sounded—and there was no sign of Mrs. Greville.

“But now,” thought he, “she *shall* see me, and alone, too.”

When luncheon was nearly over, and still Eveline did not appear, he said to the duchess he hoped Mrs. Greville was not ill, that she was absent.

“Oh, dear no,” replied she; “she went with Lady Hurstmonceaux to take the shooting-party some luncheon.”

Baffled again! But—was it possible? Could it be that she had gone in the hope of seeing him? Had she relented? And he had stayed at home on purpose to see her, while she was on the hill-side expecting him! There was madness in the thought.

But his hostess put such high aspirations to flight by her next observation, addressed to the Marchioness of L——.

“We are not often honoured with a man’s presence at luncheon, and if Mrs. Greville had not apprised me that you”—addressing Vandeleur — “were not out shooting, I should

hardly have believed that we saw you in the flesh. Lady A——, what would you like to do this afternoon? Will you and Lady Julia ride? Mr. Vandeleur will, I am sure, be charmed to be your cavalier," and Vandeleur found himself disposed of for the afternoon.

His first opportunity of speaking to Mrs. Greville did not occur till after dinner, when seeing her turning over the leaves of a photograph-book, he went up to her. On the open page was a likeness of herself. He bent down to look at it—sighed—and said, "How like! how lovely!" He remembered how she used to blush and be pleased when *he* told her of her beauty which she used to say she only prized for his sake.

But the spell had lost its charm.

"Do you think so?" she carelessly replied, and calling to Lord Plantagenet, she said, "Do you like this?—Mr. Vandeleur thinks it good."

"When you are absent I fancy that I do like it, *faute de mieux*; but when you are present it looks to me like a caricature," said Lord Plan, with honest admiration.

Eveline thanked him with a smile and a look meant for Vandeleur's especial benefit. He bit his lip and walked away, and the

duchess, who happened to be near, saw his annoyance, and went up to Eveline.

"I imagined, at least I was told, that you and the Vandeleurs were great friends," said she, "and *that* was the reason which induced me to ask them, thinking to give *you* pleasure; but there does not seem an *entente cordiale* between you. You never speak to *her*, and invariably 'snub' *him*."

Thou throbbing heart, be still!

Eveline looked up with a mischievous smile.

"Ower-meikle hameliness spoils gude courtesy," said she, with a strong Scotch accent.

"Oh, oh!" said the duchess, "blows the wind from *that* quarter? *J'y suis*."

How Eveline despised herself at that moment, and hated the man who had brought her to this pass—inducing her thus to stoop to deceit! for although the meaning that she had conveyed to the duchess was in the aggregate true, it was not all the truth; escaping herself, and throwing all the odium on him!

How thankful was she when the duchess, dismissing the subject from her mind as too trivial to be dwelt on, continued,

"I came with the intention of asking you

to sing ‘*Qual cuor tradisti.*’ The Duchesse de St. Aulaire has been talking of Grisi, and I have an idea that you could sing her celebrated song.”

“After talking of Grisi! I never knew you ill-natured before, duchess,” said Eveline, playfully. “Let me rather sing some Scotch ballads.”

“Ah! madame, *je vous en prie*,” said the duchesse, *une grande dame* of the *ancienne régime*, and who looked it, every inch of her. “*Ma fille*, she sing him herself *ven* she was *jeune femme*. He bring back to me *de time past*, *vat vill* you—*dat fine time of de jeunesse.*”

“Not more lovely than a beautiful autumn, madame,” said Eveline, bowing to the grand old lady, who had but narrowly escaped the guillotine, and who, it was said, when scarce more than a child, had bearded Robespierre to his face. “I am at your orders.”

Eveline would never have had courage to choose such a song to sing in the presence of Vandeleur, who thoroughly understood Italian, but, being pressed for it, she was rather pleased that an opportunity was given her of pouring out on him the bitter reproaches that filled her heart, but which no power would

have induced her to utter in any other form. Her agitation was so great that it was some seconds before she could steady her voice sufficiently to begin; and the lady who had offered to accompany her, thinking she was nervous, good-naturedly continued playing till she should recover her courage. Repeating to herself some of his most stinging words, and thus enhancing every bitter feeling, she began. The tremulousness of her voice, which at first she could not control, gave a pathos to the opening words, *Qual cuor tradisti! qual cuor perdesti!* that no art could have surpassed; but she steadied as she went on with thrilling intensity, pouring out her heart with all the passion of which it was capable. Her hands clenched, and her eyes fell on Vandeleur, as, with triumphant scorn, she gave—

“Da me fuggire
Tentasti invano!
Crudel Romano!
Tu sei con me!”

So intense was the passion with which she sang, that her audience listened breathless, feeling that some tragedy must be at hand. A momentary silence ensued, and then a burst of applause. She was told that it was a tri-

umph of art, but her heaving bosom could have given a truer exposition, and said it was a triumph of nature over art.

Vandeleur had perfectly understood her—understood the covert reproach—the scornful defiance, and was furious at being “sung at;” in public, too, when any one who had any suspicion of their former *liaison* would have their suspicions confirmed.

“It was unwomanly, unfeminine, inconceivable!”

She felt him approach. What would he say? Thump, thump, went her heart.

“No one can deny your talent, Mrs. Greville, but, in my humble opinion, such songs should not be sung in public by ladies.”

“Would you have them sung in private by gentlemen?” asked Mrs. Greville, artlessly, with a pertness that her high-bred manner and beauty alone redeemed.

“You know perfectly well what I mean,” said he, between his teeth, “it is execrable bad taste to parade your feelings to the world, and equally so to sing at a person.”

He had overshot his mark. He expected to see her quail beneath his anger—he had ere now seen her tremble at a harsh look from him—but those days were over.

He had hit the mark, but the bolt slipped off as from adamant. No man is a match in that kind of fencing. Her heart stopped beating, but she gave no sign.

“*My feelings?*” said she, looking up with admirable surprise. “*Pardon, monsieur*, they are not *my* feelings—nor my words—nor my music. The compliment is very great, but you do me too much honour,” and she bowed with the polite smile of deprecation of high praise. “Duchess,” she added, turning to her, “Mr. Vandeleur has been censuring me for singing *Qual cuor*. He says that it is not fit for a lady to sing.”

“I regret that my selection should have displeased Mr. Vandeleur,” said the duchess, raising her calm, proud eyes to his, in haughty surprise at such audacity; “I think it one of the most beautiful and touching songs in the opera. And you did it justice, dear Eveline; you quite surpassed yourself. Your visit to Italy—the land of song—has, if possible, improved your voice.”

Vandeleur was discomfited—utterly routed. Had he been mistaken in supposing that that song had been aimed at him? He retreated, with an impression that not only had he shown himself in the light of a coxcomb in

the eyes of the woman whose good graces he was beginning to prize, but that he had made an egregious fool of himself, than which few things are more galling to a man's vanity. He would fain have retrieved his error, but that she gave him no chance. Indeed, every such attempt on his part was received by her with the amused surprise that might have been shown by some one whom he had mistaken for her, and who was, consequently, at cross purposes.

The duchess never quite forgot that she had been induced to invite him and his wife—whom she extremely disliked—under, what proved to be, false pretences; nor could she quite forgive his questioning her taste in music, which was considered unexceptionable. Small vanities are easily wounded. Vandeleur was in disgrace.

It cannot be supposed that the tension on Eveline's mind during the fortnight that the Vandeleurs stayed, was without its effect, but never for a moment did she yield, although when she saw him become gentle and humble, and saw the old worship return—saw his earnest eyes dwelling on her, yearning to implore her forgiveness—it was a hard struggle to resist the tenderness that pleaded in her heart so strongly for him.

“Oh! that I could learn to hate him!” would she cry to herself after one of these struggles; “to hate him—to be as indifferent as he deems me!” Then, starting from her momentary weakness, she would exclaim, “Am I a besotted fool, that I waver for the hundredth part of a second? When he wearied of me, did he not cast me aside with less feeling than he would have shown to a worthless dog? And am I—I—*Eveline Greville*—wavering? Oh! no! *même un âne ne trébuche pas deux fois sur la même pierre*. What was that that he wrote me? That mine was not love, but—oh! horror! horror! shame upon him!”

But when his last evening came, her courage nearly broke down—not quite; but she was glad to sit at the piano, and warble forth ballad after ballad, as they were asked for. She had no strength for fun and repartee that night.

They were to part—perhaps never to meet again—and they were parting in bitter hatred. If only to say one word—that she forgave him;—but *did* she forgive him? Had he not blasted her life? ruined every sweet hope on earth; and perilled her soul in heaven? *Forgive him?* Never! And yet—if that fable

about redemption were truth? What sublime forgiveness was there! and with such thoughts passing through her mind, her face assumed the old loving sweetness, as seated at the piano her hands moved over the keys in dreamy, musical wanderings.

For once she was unconscious of Vandeleur's eye, which was greedily drinking in her every varying expression, as he stood there watching her, and thinking of those past days when she never met him but with a smile—when a look from him would bring her nestling in his arms—when her soft lips were the first to kiss from his brow any cloud that rested there—oh! for the days that were gone! for Vandeleur was miserable in his home. How he started when, changing her dreamy music for a sad, but exquisite air, so perfectly adapted to the words, that it would be hard to say which was written for the other, her delicious voice gave forth almost his own thoughts—

“No more shall the spring my lost pleasures restore;
Uncheer'd I still wander alone;
And sunk in dejection for ever deplore
The sweets of the days that are gone.

“While the sun as he rises to others seems bright,
I think how he formerly shone;
Whilst others cull blossoms I find but a blight,
And sigh for the days that are gone.

“I stray where the dew falls in moonlighted groves,
And list to the nightingale’s song ;
Her plaint still reminds me of long-vanished joys,
And the sweets of the days that are gone.

“Each dew-drop that falls from the dark eye of night,
Seems a tear for the bliss that is flown,
Whilst others cull blossoms I find but a blight,
And sigh for the days that are gone.”

The voice of the songstress faltered as the last notes died away ; and hers were not the only eyes that were full of tears. Her music called back many a slumbering memory—many a long-forgotten day when all things were more lovely than ever they had been since—and many a thought to which time had lent its tender halo—even as the cataract rushing down the mountain side in noisy brawl, fades into a gentle murmur when far on its way from its turbulent parent—rose up in her hearers’ hearts.

Vandeleur drew near. Had she been addressing that song to him ? His heart beat thick and fast.

“Do you indeed sigh for the days—those dear days—that are gone ?” he murmured, in an impassioned whisper, that no one heard but herself.

She felt his breath warm on her cheek—could almost hear the wild pulsation of his

heart. She nearly shrieked, but with an awful effort she rallied. The mist was in her eyes, and she continued playing for a few moments :—then wheeling round on the stool she confronted him. Her eyes, erstwhile so sorrow-laden, were now brimming with fun and raillery, as with mock demureness she said—

“ You once before did me the honour of thinking that I reproduced my own feelings in song, and as you seem so desirous that I should give them vent in the soft strains of harmony, I will e’en content you.” She turned back to the instrument, and played a light, merry air, with a catching refrain in it.

Vandeleur changed his position, and took up one from whence he could see her face. An arch expression hovered over it, and the sweet mouth quivered with fun, as she paused for a moment, while she strung a few rhymes together, which she sung with much archness and point.

His feelings may be imagined, as he listened to these words :—

“ One day, sweet Sue, she loved a swain
(Or thought she did—its all one way),
Who swore to her he’d true remain.

“ This swain, who was a rover gay,
Soon said, ‘ Sweet Sue, oh let us part !
See, here, my life ! here’s back your heart !’

"Sweet Sue—she knew the heart was whole,
And tho' she wept—(or *seem'd* to weep—)
She thank'd that swain within her soul.

"For well she knew, that wicked Sue !
The heart it had nor scratch nor wound ;
In sooth it was as good as new !

" 'Sweet heart,' she said (her own she meant),
'That simple youth has not hurt thee,
So I will thank him merrily.

" 'The gift is more than he doth think,
But ours, sweet heart, is all the gain,
So let us thank him both again !'

"So Sue, she thank'd that roving swain,
And took her heart so gladly back,
And, laughing, thank'd him once again !"

The song ended in a burst of coquettish
raillery, in the midst of which she heard the
word, "Heartless !"

"Meaning me," said she, looking up, inno-
cently, and still playing the refrain. "*Souvent
femme varie, bien fou qui s'y fie*," and dropping
her hands in her lap, she pursed up her mouth
and nodded her head with an air of great
wisdom.

"Only a little Spanish gipsy song," said
she, audaciously, in answer to the laughing
queries addressed to her.

"Is she a devil or a woman ?" thought

Vandeleur, seeing her bandy back some playful repartees with the men who stood round her.

"You really must teach me that song," said one lady, "it is the most amusing little thing I ever heard."

"I doubt the swain being of that opinion," said the duke, whom the laughter had brought to the piano.

"I thought that people always liked to be thanked for their gifts," said Eveline, demurely.

"You wicked little thing!" laughed Lady Hurstmonceaux.

"Madam, your most obedient," said Eveline, curtsying with mock gravity; "and now I resign my place to one, than whom none can so worthily fill it," and she handed her to the piano, on which Lady Hurstmonceaux was no mean performer.

Fairly exhausted, Eveline sought refuge with the duchess.

"*Sauf votre bon plaisir, je m'esquive, duchesse,*" she said, presently, "I am so tired."

"Do, my dear, you are as white as a ghost," said her grace, and Eveline slipped away unobserved.

A heavy sigh, or rather a fluttering sob—such as one may hear from a child long after it has sobbed its little heart out, and from those who have suffered long and deeply—escaped Eveline as she entered the long corridor that led to her bedroom, but it was arrested almost in its birth by a half-suppressed shriek as she saw a man step from the shade of a recessed door close to her.

“Eveline, we cannot part like this. I have been suffering the torments of hell. Give me one word—one kind word before we part,” said Vandeleur, who stood before her.

She uttered no word, but looked calmly, coldly at him, and he continued passionately,

“Eveline ! you have no right to be so cruel—so bitter—no right to treat me as you do ! My life is so wretched, so miserable ; my home is colder and more loveless than ever. Eveline,” and he opened his arms to her; and his voice assumed a tone of the deepest pathos, “be to me once more what you have been to me—the joy of my life.”

He bowed his head, and, almost involuntarily, sank to her feet.

She let him be for a second or two—an eternity to him—and then, with a slow,

haughty enunciation that allowed not a syllable to escape—

“You make a slight mistake, Mr. Vandeleur. I am not aware of having treated you, or any other gentleman of my acquaintance, with discourtesy; and allow me to remind you, that you have as little right to utter words of love to *me*, as *I* have wish to hear them. Good-night.”

She swept past him—swept down the corridor with the air of an empress—her head erect and her step unfaltering—nor did she turn once even on entering her room.

Once there she locked and double-locked her door, and sank down, trembling and shaking all over.

“Thank God! I did not break down!” she gasped. “Thank God! I did not make a fool of myself! Neither by word nor sign did I betray myself, and I am revenged! Yes, revenged! And will be, again and again, till head and hand fail me!”

Exhausted with her emotions she paused.

“And that is the man I once loved! *Once* loved? Great heaven protect me!”

She sank on her knees, and there let us draw a veil.

CHAPTER XI.

Beatrice. Ah ! forgive me—sorrow makes me seem
Sternier than else my nature might have been.
I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
And they forebode,—but what can they forebode
Worse than I now endure ?”

THE CENCI.

MRS. GREVILLE was playing a desperate game ; but she was a desperate woman, playing for high stakes, and risking all her possessions on the issue of that die. Some victories, however, are dearly purchased ; and the hollow eye and fading cheek were proofs, that if not worsted in the battle, she had come forth so wounded as to make it doubtful who was the victor.

The spur off, it needed almost superhuman courage to come to the front again, all bleeding as she was.

Oh, for rest—for home—for solitude, where

the tension might be relaxed, where brain and heart might lay down their armour and be at rest.

Anything for rest ! But what if Vandeleur sought her in her retirement, which some inner feeling told her he would do ? She recoiled, shuddering from so dread a possibility. Beloved but hated, he had become the haunting terror of her life. Much as she longed for the rest of home, she dared not seek it, for she had not strength at present for another combat ; so that when the Pierreponts, who stopped at Rossmoor on their way home, asked her to accompany them to Gaveston, she gladly acceded.

One morning at breakfast Lord Gaveston threw a letter across the table to his wife, saying to his mother that Vandeleur had offered them a visit.

Eveline felt his eyes turn upon her, but she returned his look calmly and proudly. After breakfast she went to Pamela, asked her to let her know if Mr. Vandeleur were coming, for if so, she would return home, as she had no wish to meet him.

“Has it come to open warfare between you ?” asked Pamela, “or is it that you and madame did not get on at Rossmoor ?”

“Neither. Mrs. Vandeleur and I troubled each other very little; but Mr. Vandeleur was good enough to tell me—the last night that he was at Rossmoor—that—that—in short that he thought me fair among women”—impossible to describe the contempt in her voice and in the disdainful throwing back of her haughty head—“and I do not choose to meet him again. Simply that.”

Pamela assured her that his visit should be refused.

“Do not make any excuse,” said Mrs. Greville. “I have reason to believe that he knows I am here. Tell him that I positively decline to meet him!”

“I can quite understand your indignation. A married man can hardly offer a greater insult to a woman; but be careful, Eveline, of galling his vanity too far. A woman does not often find an enemy in one of the other sex, but when such a one is base enough to turn on her there is nothing too vile and cowardly for him to insinuate.”

“What! are *you* taking his part! *You* who admonished me—let me see—when was it? three years ago! You are becoming benevolent.”

Pamela was pained at the scoffing tone, and

for the first time uttered a reproach to her friend.

“Have I ever been other than—I will not say benevolent, but—kind and loving to you?”

The gentle tone, the still more gentle look, smote Eveline to the quick. She passionately craved her friend’s forgiveness, and upbraided herself for her ingratitude.

That fortnight’s intercourse with Vandeleur had utterly unhinged her. Love alternated with hatred—a longing to forgive and be at peace, with a fierce desire of further revenge.

Hard, reckless, mocking with others, she showed the utmost tenderness to Pamela and her boy—a rosy loving romp; now her tyrant, now her slave. Pamela wanted to keep her longer with her, but she was too restless to remain, and went home at last. Lady Gaveston could not understand her, but her heart was sore for her friend, and she parted with her in no little anxiety; for she rightly guessed that whatever the cause might be, it was no light one that had thus changed her friend and brought to life the hard, revengeful Gaveston blood.

Though craving for rest, Eveline did not find that the solitude at Llanfenydd brought it her. She had lost her compass and her reckoning was false, but a softening influence

was gradually gaining power over her heart, which, if the parent of much anguish, was parent also of that which might in time be "shaped to some perfect end."

Once again she visited the graves—long neglected—of those so dear to her. Few of us can divest ourselves, when standing by the tombs of those we loved, of a certain speculation as to the possible omniscience of the spirits that once tenanted those earthly remains beneath our feet; and it was some feeling of this kind that had kept Eveline for many years from the hallowed ground which she now watered with her tears. In her anguish she would call aloud to her dead mother, between whom and herself she had placed an eternal barrier. Her faith was shattered. There was no atonement for her, the unbeliever—no pardon for such fault as that which burdened her soul. She might weep in vain at the gates of heaven—the kingdom of a God of justice, but not of mercy; of vengeance, but not of love. No tears could open to her the portals that shut her from her pure, holy, and beloved mother, and her scarcely less loved friend, Aunt Mary.

And her husband? that good, noble husband, whose love she had but ill requited,

whose memory she had outraged ! Oh, to have him back for but one day—one hour—in which to pour forth her gratitude for the tender, fostering care which had sheltered her from all evil, and which she had accepted as a matter of course ; of which she had been unmindful at the time, but the full value of which she now understood.

“ Oh ! my husband ! my husband ! forgive me ! ” went up in a bitter cry.

Ah ! would not her dear ones plead for her in heaven ? plead that her fearful guilt might be pardoned ? that her terrible punishment might in some measure avail ? But would prayers—would *ought* avail to change the irrevocable decree ? Alas ! to what misery, to what shame had her guilty love not brought her ?

“ Master of mortal bosoms, Love !—O Love !
Thou art the essence of the universe,
Soul of the invisible world, and canst create
Hope, joy, praise, passion, madness, or despair,
As suiteth thy high will ! To some thou bringest
A valour, a lenitive for every wound
The unkind world inflicts on them. To others
Thy breath but breathes destruction, and thy smile
Scathes like lightning. Now a star of peace
Heralding sweet evening to our stormy day,
And now a meteor with far-scattering fire
Shedding red ruin on our flowers of life ! ”

A year or two of mad, wild happiness, and

every sweet flower of her life had been scathed by the "scattering fire" of sin. Was it worth this? Is sin ever worth its wages? Let each one answer for himself.

But these remorseful moods were not always on her; there were times when the silence and solitude around her were insupportable—when she felt that unless she could escape from that

"Heritage of woe—

That fearful empire which the human breast

But holds to rob the heart within of rest"—

that she should go mad. Study and occupations had lost their zest, and she cruelly felt now the loss of her fortune, which had compelled her to give up much that had hitherto filled her life.

Having revenged herself on Vandeleur, her bitterness died out, and a deadly weariness took its place. She would sit for hours doing nothing—would wander about wearily and do nothing again, and would wonder how she was ever to live her life; no one to strew fresh flowers on her way; no one to bring her sweet, home joys—the brightest flowers of earth. Alone, with a warm, affectionate heart, capable of the deepest feeling, must she henceforth drag on her existence, unblest—unloved

—not daring to give a human voice to her despair. Oh! it was horrible! And in her agony she would curse the man who had brought her to this cruel pass. He had sought her for his own content, and then heaped on her insult, and terror, and a life-long pain. With such thoughts would again come an impotent longing for revenge, but it died out again in fitful flames as she moaned over her broken life.

At Christmas she went once more to Beaumanoir, where the kindly, motherly welcome did her good, and softened the hard, reckless moods that had distressed Pamela; till one day Vandeleur made his appearance, which was the signal for the old demon of revenge to tear her again.

No reproaches ever escaped her—they would have gratified him as proving her not quite insensible—but, while showing the utmost indifference, she lost no opportunity of mortifying him, of wounding his vanity, of making him appear always *de trop* with every woman there.

One day, by a rare chance, he found her alone, and bitterly did he upbraid her. She listened very quietly, very calmly—touching-up a drawing all the time; then raising her eyes carelessly to his, said—

"I suppose that you are very eloquent, and a year or two ago I might have thought so; but now, to tell you the truth, I think you very prosy, and—you slightly bore me. I was once taken by a superficial glitter, and mistook fancy for feeling, for I never loved you, Mr. Vandeleur;" and with another careless look at him, she contemplated the effect of a wash she had laid over her drawing.

Bitter and sharp was his answer, but it moved her not. She only replied in the same *nonchalant* tone—

"Before I knew you, I used to hear that not only were you a very courteous man, but a very pleasant one. You have forgotten the ways of your youth; though, as Madame de Perpignan and Mrs. St. John were saying yesterday, men are very apt to get prosy at your age, and one must not expect too much. My dear sir, don't you know that

"A man towards fifty, cured of kittenish gambols,
Thinks more of hot dinners than moonlight rambles?"

or, if he don't, he *ought*, for his own sake; for middle-aged lovers

"(It's a fact that's undeniable)
To ridicule are slightly liable."

"You are very funny—very witty," said Vandeleur, furious, for he was very careful of

his appearance, and was greatly disturbed by the sight of the gray hairs that were beginning to show in his curly locks.

“Ah, yes ; madame has a great deal of what you call *de vit*—she is *spirituelle*, *n'est ce pas*, Monsieur Vandeleur ?” said a laughing voice behind him.

Vandeleur, too angry to reply, stalked out of the room.

“Monsieur est de mauvaise humeur, apparemment ; qu'est ce donc ?” asked the bright little Frenchwoman.

“A quarante ans c'est pas la peine de faire la cour, madame, voila tout,” replied Eveline carelessly, “ça ennuit.”

“Que voulez-vous ? Chassez le natural, il revient au galop,” said Madame de Perpignan ; “cependant Monsieur Vandeleur n'est pas mal.”

“Comme ça,” responded Eveline, shrugging her shoulders, “j'aime tout aussi bien Monsieur de Perpignan.”

Who could have believed that the woman, sore and wounded as she was, still loved the man whom she ridiculed so mercilessly ?

Vandeleur left Beaumanoir that same day, and at dinner Mrs. Greville said that she had caught cold in her eyes, and promised to try the various recipes suggested for such ophthalmic disasters.

CHAPTER XII.

“Wer da fällt über ihm laufen alle Welt.”

WHEN the London season again came round, Mrs. Greville, seeking in vain for medicine for a mind diseased, went to town, hoping to find in the excitement there some distraction from her wretchedness. But she was no longer of any use—she was living in lodgings, and it was hardly worth while sending cards to one who gave nothing, and whose name—well—was not quite untarnished. So said the world, shrugging its shoulders on seeing Mrs. Greville's card, which she had left on all her acquaintance. Scandal, which might have died out if only in pity to her punishment—only that the world has no pity—had revived briskly now that she was not only down in it, but that her most influential friends were absent. Pamela, for important family reasons,

was at Beaumanoir, where her mother, having no daughter old enough to be introduced, preferred staying to nurse her; the Duke of Montserrat had had a touch of gout, and had gone with his wife to some German baths; and Lady Hurstmonceaux, with filial obedience, was drinking the waters of Ems, hoping thereby to lift from her shoulders the disgrace that had fallen on them.

Unsupported by her best friends, Mrs. Greville found herself not only neglected, but slighted. Miss Wilson had not let the grass grow under her feet; and though Eveline's unhappy *liaison* had been broken off long ago, the scandal of the "beautiful Mrs. Greville—that immaculate woman who had always been cited as an example"—"the bosom friend of the exclusive Duchess of Montserrat"—"the paragon of virtue"—did not lose its relish for dating back.

What cares the world for dates, when a beautiful woman, of whom the many have been envious, has to be picked to pieces? Does the vulture pause to consider when his repast was killed?

"Who spread such injurious reports?" asked some, who, liking Mrs. Greville, were loath to believe anything against her.

But when it came to close questioning, no one knew *who* had said *what*, except that Mrs. Vandeleur declared that Mrs. Greville should never enter *her* doors; anyhow, one way and another, whispers got abroad, and Mrs. Greville was less and less sought after. Ignorant of any rumours, she attributed the defalcation of her acquaintances to her fallen fortunes, and very bitter did it make her. She returned with haughty interest the coolness she met with, and turned into enemies those who were wavering.

Her intimate friends, the Challenors, the Pierreponts, and a few others, were unchanged, and all her men friends were not only staunch themselves, but tried to persuade their wives to call and show some civility to that "pretty woman" now that she was down in the world, reminding them that they had been ready enough to accept her kindness when she was in a position to offer any.

I doubt if Mrs. Greville gained much by this intervention. A few cards were left by the ladies, while their husbands and sons called more frequently than ever, which did not ameliorate matters; and, finding herself coolly received by women, she affected men's society more than was wise. But she was

far from happy—the old love was gnawing at her heart—rendering everything else “stale and unprofitable;” but she would not see him—in that she was resolved; though, as soon as Vandeleur learnt her address, he had hastened to her—she was out—but the next morning brought him a letter in her handwriting. With a somewhat exultant smile he broke the seal, to find—his own card. He wrote to her such a letter as he knew well how to compose, and which had power to shake her soul to the utmost. His words fell on her parched heart like dew in the desert, but only for a moment—the next—and the letter was burning on the hearth. He made various fruitless attempts to see her, and at last wrote again. This time his letter was returned unopened. She had no strength for another victory; her anger had faded away—a blank despair gnawed at her heart, which ached for the loving words and tones that had once made her paradise, and which were again within her reach.

Terrified at herself, and wretched in London, she resolved on going abroad; but to leave England, most probably for ever, without one last look on the face that was still

terribly dear to her, was impossible. See him once more, she must.

Dressed in black, and closely veiled, she went into his street at an hour which she knew of old that he was wont to go out, and as she walked slowly on she saw him come down the steps of his house. Her first impulse was to turn and fly, so guilty did she feel ; but, certain of not being recognised, she advanced, with throbbing heart, drinking her fill of his every feature—his garments—even to the stick he carried. All was stereotyped on her mind with the rapid but intense vividness of a highly-strung nervous system. She knew that she would never see him again—that she was gazing her last on all that the world held dearest to her, and all her old love returned. Never to be yielded to again ; but it beat in her heart with all the old intensity—with a yearning amounting to agony—and which not even the remembrance of his treachery, of his cruelty, nor the lesson she had bitterly learnt of the disgrace, the dishonour, of loving a married man, could lessen.

Her trance was broken by his evident recognition, for he approached her with rapid steps, and accosted her by name.

As though any one could fail to recognise

that gliding gait, or that any disguise could hide the marvellous grace of a figure unmatched in London !

Her knees knocked together as he spoke to her, but she answered him in German, affecting not to understand him : but he followed her—imploring her to listen—telling her that he knew perfectly well who she was. “And,” he added, “I know perfectly well also what brought you, disguised like this. You love me, Eveline.”

Her pride, stung by this assertion, uttered somewhat triumphantly, nearly betrayed her ; but she saved herself, and, again replying in German, a language which he did not understand, she signed to an empty cab that was passing, sprang into it, ignoring his recognition and his salutation, as he stood uncovered, while she desired the cabman to drive her to the City, the only misleading address that she could think of, and she drove off with a palpitating heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

“If you find any ill that lies heavy on you,
Disburthen yourself of it into the bosom
Of your confessor, who stands between God and you
To pray for you.”

TAYLOR.

“Here I cast away
All human passions, all revenge, all pride.
I think, speak, act no ill ; I do but hide
Under these words, like embers, every spark
Of that which has consumed me.”

SHELLEY.

IN the time of which I write, the North of Devon was a land but little known. No fear, then, of meeting with those abnormal troops of tourists, too well known to need any description, and which are the despair of people of anti-gregarious tastes. Off the road—beyond rails—with accommodation scant and far between—a stray artist now and then was about the only person who, for the sake of the extreme

beauty of the country, cared to encounter privations to which the luxurious travelling in England has ill-adapted us. In fine weather, when every sound, every sight, woos us abroad, small, dark rooms, scant furniture, the absence of pleasant appliances of civilisation, are matters of little moment; and even the homeliest fare is not impossible when eaten beneath the shade of a spreading tree, with a whispering rivulet at our feet, and a glorious view in the distance. But when the soft, noiseless rain comes down, it means work in Devonshire, and the rose hides her head to show her thorns. Those matters which had conduced to a series of pleasant picnics, and which had made us consort lovingly with nature, and dream of the charms of a Bedouin life, now become unbearable hardships; and the erratic postal arrangements, which had so charmed us, as leaving us free from the trying duty of answering a daily packet of letters, now appals us, as we remember that the nearest posting-house is at least twenty miles off, and that the receipt, under thirty-six hours, of our impatient order of "horses at once" is a problem hard to solve. Our fingers tap our aneroid, with the childish hope of sending the needle up; but

the "rain it raineth," and the mercury descends, and our impatience ascends. Books we have none, and we are fain to resort to a newspaper at least four days old—feeling ourselves a century behind our time in this God-forgotten place; or we pour out, with pen and ink, our miseries to some friend, who—happy mortal—is living within the pale of civilisation; or we touch up our sketches, which mock us with their brightness as we look in vain for some opening in the leaden sheet above, or at the curtain of rain which shuts out all view, and which ascends in steaming mist from the hot earth almost as fast as the clouds pour forth their endless water-courses. There is nothing for it but patience (which we endure with remarkable impatience), and try to help the time with bitter philosophy about experience. But in fine weather we are more than repaid for a little roughing by a ramble in this lovely country, where exquisite little hamlets are embosomed in richly clad woods—where pretty rivulets turn the rarely seen, but picturesque, water-wheel—where the genuine hospitality and cordial welcome of the simple inhabitants—to say nothing of the delicate beauty of the women—contribute not a little to the pleasure of our sojourn.

It was hither that Mrs. Greville, hunted out of London, dreading a return to Wales, from which she had so lately fled—a prey to remorse—and finding the intense heat too overpowering to travel south, bent her steps, hoping to cheat time in a place where, at all events, she would be unknown—where insults could not reach her—and where in new scenes, and in lovely objects for her pencil, she might beguile her miserable thoughts. The being far away from her fellow-creatures had in itself an attraction, and leaving her maid and her luggage in the last town worthy that appellation, she herself went on an exploring expedition.

After some twenty miles posting, she came to a lovely hamlet, intersected by a stream that mimicked its betters in the most ridiculous way. Cascades—pools—rushing water—twistings—windings—all perfect, but all in the most baby proportions, and it was spanned by a pretentious bridge, quite a high arch over this thread of water, that needed but a few stepping stones to cross it dry shod. Insignificant as it was now, it could tell another tale after heavy rain, as that high-arched bridge, that Eveline smiled at, could vouch for. The driver went to bait his horses, and she to sketch. She was so charmed with the

tranquillity and retirement of a spot which afforded ample scope for her pencil, that she resolved to remain there a few days, if rooms could be found. That difficulty was soon solved, for a bright, buxom young woman with fair hair, and a complexion that Devonshire peasantry can alone boast of—"roses dipped in milk"—that defies the warm kisses of the amorous sun—attracted by the novel sight of a stranger, came out of an adjacent cottage, with a baby in her arms. Eveline entered into conversation with her, while her rapid pencil transferred the picturesque group to her paper.

"Cude her find rumes? Yes, her cude," replied the woman, in broad Devonshire; "we have bewtiffull rumes in our house; wude her cume and luke at them?"

With much pride the young wife showed her parlour and best bed-room; drawing the lady's attention to the staring paper, the gaudy-coloured prints, and—climax of luxuries!—a horse-hair couch, which even then, though shining in unsullied purity, the dame tenderly wiped down with her apron.

Mrs. Greville gave all due praise, but was more struck by the extreme cleanliness of the cottage, than by the magnificence of its fur-

niture, which to the simple minds of its owners represented rare specimens of the highest art, and the most elegant upholstery. It had been purchased by their joint savings, both before and after their marriage, and possessed a value in their eyes that we, carelessly ordering a couch from Howards, or a new velvet pile from Jackson, know not how to estimate.

Satisfied of the cleanliness within, Mrs. Greville looked abroad at the sunny landscape which smiled as if it and nature's tears were strangers ; and giving little heed to the home department, she engaged the rooms for a week, and, returning to the beauties out of doors, she dismissed the fly for her maid and luggage.

The appearance of the smart lady's maid brought many a rustic swain to the feet of Mrs. Jones, who, being assured that a week would bring this frightful exile to an end, thought that for that time she might exist.

The first two days were so gloriously fine that beyond sleeping under the rose-covered roof, Mrs. Greville knew nothing of her lodgment ; but on the third day the first thing that greeted her, on throwing open her window, was a dull steady rain. It was very provoking, but the day was got through, in

the hope that the following one would make amends. Not a bit of it. The rain meant to come down, and it did, with untiring pertinacity, too.

Shut up in a small dark room, bare of—what were to Eveline—the necessities of life, she felt that another such day would be the death of her. Easy enough to say that she would go—but how to do so?

No available messenger, who would go twenty miles such weather as that; there was nothing for it but to wait till the chance post bore her letter to its destination.

Our great poet tells us that there is a “deep nick in Time’s restless wheel for each man’s good;” and this untoward delay brought the nick in Mrs. Greville’s wheel of life.

The following day was Sunday. The weather still precluded all possibility of sketching, for not only did it rain as steadily as ever, but a dense white fog hung over the country. She had no books and no piano. The time was hopelessly long, and though for the last few years she had never been to church for her own pleasure or benefit, she now bethought her of beguiling an hour or so by attending afternoon service in the picturesque little church, which she had already sketched more than once.

Despite the rain, a very large, though a homely congregation poured in, and she herself was shown into an old-fashioned, square pew, which she rightly conjectured was the rectory pew. Somewhat annoyed at being put there, she asked the pew opener for another seat, but the man was deaf; and misunderstanding her, assured her that it *was* the rector's seat, and that the ladies were coming; which they did—three of them—then and there.

Provoked at what might entail a return of civilities, Mrs. Greville consoled herself with the hope that she would be leaving on the Monday morning, and kept down her thick veil, so as not to be recognised if by chance they met; but she made a graceful apology to the elder lady for her unwitting intrusion. This latter assured her that she was most welcome, but this did not prevent a very natural curiosity on their part about the elegant, fashionable stranger whose face was completely hidden by an impenetrable veil. However, the service began, and all speculations were abandoned.

The evening hymn was so well sung—the voices so true and evidently so well-trained, that Eveline's attention was at once caught. She had resigned herself to hear a slovenly ser-

vice, drawled out to an ignorant congregation, such as is deemed good for a Welsh population, and she was completely astounded at the rich, sonorous voice and cultivated intonation of the clergyman, very different to what she had expected.

She could not help listening to every word ; and when the notes of one of the most beautiful of the Ancient and Modern hymns pealed through the church, she forgot the incognito which she had intended preserving, and accepting the book that the youngest lady offered her, she raised her veil and lifted her voice with the congregation.

“ When our bitter tears o’erflow,
When we mourn the lost, the dear,
Jesu ! Son of Mary, hear !

“ When the heart is sad within
With the sense of all its sin :
When the spirit shrinks with fear,
Jesu ! Son of Mary, hear !”

The music and the words thrilled to her heart, and always impressionable to the former, she entirely forgot where she was, and sang from her very soul.

One voice after another was hushed to hearken to the rich, full, powerful tones that of themselves could fill the church, and long

before the hymn ended, except the choir, every other voice was still as by enchantment. And was it not the enchantment of beauty, the most potent charm yet known to mortals?

Unconscious of the effect she was producing, she sank on her knees with a feeling which she did not attempt to analyse, but to which she had long been a stranger.

Why is it that the very identical things that we have done—seen—heard—hundreds of times without their producing the smallest impression, will at another have power to overwhelm us,

“Striking the electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound?”

The clergyman rose from his knees, and Eveline saw in the pulpit, directly facing her, a tall, handsome man—somewhat past the prime of life—on whose intellectual face were plainly written marks of care, sorrow, struggle. His broad, square brow was deeply furrowed by that most unerring plough—thought; but the sweetness about the well-cut mouth relieved the face from anything like sternness.

For a moment, as he encountered the gaze of the stranger who had forgotten all about her veil, he started with surprise, but imme-

diately recovering himself, he began his sermon.

It had been written expressly to meet some sad and pitiful cases in his parish (for sin and sorrow creep into the nethermost parts of the earth), and he had taken for his text the last five verses of the seventh chapter of the Revelation.

Had he been preaching for Eveline Greville's especial benefit, he could hardly have spoken more to the purpose, and though not much accustomed of late to pay attention to sermons (which generally wearied her) it was impossible not to listen to words, not only eloquent in themselves, but delivered with such perfect elocution, as were those which were now uttered by a voice, so melodious, that it fell like spoken music on her ears.

He spoke of the world—its pleasures and its snares — its enjoyments and disappointments — of so-called friendships which fall away when worldly riches abandon us : of the misery caused by the untruth of maybe one, in whom we had garnered up our souls—whom we had made our idol—and who had proved itself but clay after all.

He dwelt on the disappointments that must befall all those who seek their joys in

this world alone, and of the misery entailed by straying from the Truth in a search after a religion to suit—as they thought—their own exigencies.

He went on to say that though bankrupt in heart—in wealth—in good name—in all that makes this world beautiful—that though the Rejected of men may have been denied, despised as He had been when He had taken upon Himself the form of our own nature; still, with a divine love and forgiveness of which *we* are incapable, *He* was imploring the sin-laden traveller to turn back to Him—to give Him the burden that weighed so heavily—to believe in His unfailing, unaltered love, and to let Him wipe away the tears that man's cruelty has caused to flow.

It was more than mere eloquence that touched his hearers' hearts. He spoke as one who had suffered, who had known temptation; who was, like themselves, a man of flesh and blood, liable to error and struggling—*compelled* to struggle—even as they were.

It was the touch-stone of sympathy which he offered—that magic bond which unites all classes, all sorrows, and which makes all men akin.

Eveline lowered her veil to hide the tears

which coursed down her cheeks ; and the sermon over, without waiting to meditate on the impulse, she asked to be shown into the vestry.

Over that interview we draw a veil, but when Dr. Maitland left her at the door of her cottage she had quite given up her purpose of leaving it for the present.

The next morning the clergyman came to see her, and told her that his wife and daughter were coming to call and to try and induce her to return with them and stay at the rectory.

"You have not told them?" cried Eveline, terrified.

"No, my child ; your confidence is sacred, although my wife is not one to judge another. But I think it is far better that no one should ever know what you have divulged to me. It would only abase you, and self-abasement—that is, in *human* eyes—is not repentance, nor does it lead to repentance. Henceforth let the past be a matter between your own conscience and One above. Remember that He not only hath power, but *yearns* to forgive and to gather all strayed lambs to His fold."

"And you still think that I may be for-

given?" said Eveline, in a low, humble voice, with bowed head and clasped hands.

Dr. Maitland answered in words not his own.

"‘Though thy sins be scarlet, they shall be as wool.’ ‘I will cast them behind Me and remember them no more for ever.’ ‘Even as a mother comforteth her child, so will I comfort you.’"

In the course of the day, Mrs. and Miss Maitland called. Both spoke with loving pride of the husband and father, and they more than echoed Eveline's wonder and regret that one so gifted should be immured in obscurity.

"But perhaps it is merely a friendly arrangement for a few months?" suggested Mrs. Greville.

"Indeed it is not. He has been here thirty years, and he left *us* the pleasure of telling you that it was to your father he owes this living."

"*My father?*" repeated Eveline, amazed.

"Yes, Philip Gaveston. Dr. Maitland at once recognised you in church, from your marvellous likeness to his former pupil; and of course when we heard your name we looked into the Peerage and found that it was really

the daughter of his old friend who had come to this place. You can easily imagine the pleasure it is to us all to greet you, and now you must not refuse to spend the remainder of your time with us."

Eveline was deeply touched at this proof of confidence and tenderness on the part of Dr. Maitland, but feeling the absolute necessity of solitude in her present state of mind, very gratefully, but very decidedly refused, acknowledging, however, that she would be glad to find somewhat better accommodation.

Rose, a bright, happy-looking girl, here reminded her mother of a certain cottage which was to be let. It was small, but decently furnished at any rate; and as she said this, she looked in pitiful dismay round the little room in which Mrs. Greville, beautifully and fashionably dressed, looked thoroughly out of place.

Marking the look, Eveline smiled, and said that she had not been prepared for torrents of rain when she took up her abode there, and would gladly take the cottage named, at all events for a month.

She could not be persuaded to dine at the rectory, for she felt that to meet as a social friend, the man to whom she had told her

life, was impossible ; but her refusal was conveyed in so sweet and gracious a manner that it could not cause offence, and Dr. Maitland, who looked in on her in the course of the evening, understood and appreciated her motives.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I do defy him, and I spit at him,
Call him a slanderous villain and a coward."

RICHARD II.

LOVELL sat in the smoking-room of his club. It can hardly be said that he was smoking, for the cigar between his teeth was out—his hat was tilted over his eyes, and he was lounging back in his chair, indifferent to what was going on around him.

Not far from him was a group of men in various attitudes of ease and lazy comfort, from whose lips issued such dense clouds of smoke, that the men themselves loomed darkly, like shadows in a mist, out of which shone like blood-red stars the lighted ends of their cigars.

Lovell was too absorbed in his own thoughts to heed the reckless conversation going on near him, in which women's names were

lightly mentioned with more than cynical surmise, until one caught his ear, and at once arrested his attention. Scarcely believing his own senses he listened for a few moments, not moving from his attitude, but a close observer might have seen the hands clench on themselves with an iron grip that boded ill for somebody.

Some ribald talk followed, in which Eveline's name was again mentioned by the same speaker. Never was man so near his last moments without knowing it, as was that same speaker. By a great effort Lovell kept still. Some of the men glanced at him, and the voices dropped to a lower tone.

Lovell rose presently with a yawn, stretched himself, and remarked,

“How you fellows jaw,” and left the room.

That same night he lounged into his club, with a thick blackthorn in his hand—rather a heavy walking stick for a gentleman to use in the vicinity of St. James's Street—and presently he went into the card room. Here he saw Gascoyne, the man who had spoken of Eveline, playing *écarté*.

As Lovell passed him he glanced carelessly at his hand, but was arrested by something that he saw. He stood there, resting his hip on his big stick, watching.

“You don’t play fair, Mr. Gascoyne.”

The effect was startling. Every one stared at Lovell, whose high, clear tones were heard all over the room.

Mr. Gascoyne laid down his cards.

“I repeat it,” said Lovell, in a voice hoarse with passion, and his face grew white to the lips.

Mr. Gascoyne rose to his feet, and uttered one word, “Liar!”

It had hardly left his lips, when a blow straight from the shoulder hit him between the eyes.

He went down at once, with the blood gushing from his nose, and before any one could interfere Lovell had seized him, and was inflicting such severe corporeal punishment with the identical blackthorn, as was not likely to be easily forgotten.

Lord Lorton dragged Lovell back—it was full time—he did not resist, but cast the wretch he had been beating, from him, broke his stick with a snap across his knee, and threw the pieces at him.

“Let that be a warning how you call a gentleman a liar,” said Lovell, with a contemptuous glance at the heap that lay writhing on the floor. “If I am wanted everybody

knows where to find me," and, taking Lord Lorton's arm, they left the club together.

They walked down St. James's Street in silence, nor was it broken till they reached Lovell's rooms.

"I don't fancy that Gascoyne will call me out—a man who is coward enough to vilify a helpless woman, will take his punishment like the cur he is—but if he does, I suppose you will act for me?"

"Undoubtedly, my dear fellow," said Lorton. "Of course it wasn't cards?"

"Never mind what it was, Lorton. He deserved all he got, and more—but he did cheat, I saw it."

The next morning the two friends breakfasted together in Lovell's rooms—that over, they made themselves comfortable with cigars and easy chairs. Little was said about the affair overnight—men don't talk like women of what is uppermost.

Presently Mr. Webster was announced, and Lovell introduced him to Lorton, but kept his seat and his cigar.

"Don't mind me," said he, as Lorton suggested retiring to another room.

Mr. Webster, addressing Lord Lorton, said that perhaps the informality mattered the less

as he trusted all might be amicably arranged, for he was the bearer of a conciliatory message. Mr. Gascoyne had certainly used a very strong expression, but Lord Lorton would acknowledge that he had had great provocation. If Mr. Lovell would apologise for the severe censure—a mistaken one, Mr. Webster was assured, or he would not be there on his present mission—that he had passed on Mr. Gascoyne's play, the apology would be accepted, and this most unfortunate matter could be settled.

Lovell had been quietly smoking during this speech. On its coming to an end he took the cigar from his mouth, and asked in the mildest voice "whether Mr. Gascoyne had sent that message."

Deceived by the conciliatory tone, Mr. Webster replied that he had, and that he—Mr. Webster—trusted that the whole affair might be forgotten, and the scandal avoided. "Indeed," he continued, "Mr. Gascoyne is quite of my opinion."

"Is he?" said Lovell, in the same sweet voice, a trifle more caressing, perhaps. "Ah!—well—tell him from me that I repeat he did *not* play fair, and that I shall have much pleasure in calling him a swindler and a coward to-night—or any other night—at the club or

elsewhere, or wherever I may meet him ; and that I shall have equal pleasure in inflicting the same chastisement on him again, and shall be equally delighted to meet him on this or the other side of the channel, as best suits himself."

Mr. Webster got up, aghast.

Lovell's manner had been so very pleasant that he had gone on listening, too astonished to speak.

"Good morning," said Lovell, rising, and politely opening the door for his visitor, "you will find me here every day till two o'clock."

"What a reckless fellow you are!" said Lorton, with a voice and manner that showed his admiration for the other's coolness. "Gascoyne will surely not brook that."

"My dear Lorton," said Lovell, calmly watching the little blue cloud that wreathed upwards from his lips, "have you never observed that you may lick a cur all you like, and he will never turn on you? He'll only whine."

"That's a nice sentiment to have of a man you have beaten to a jelly. Was that in your mind when you brought that big blackthorn into the card-room?"

"No, I didn't think of it then, nor even

when I was beating him. It occurred to me afterwards when I remembered how he trembled, and never offered a blow. Do you think I hurt him? I did try," this in an apologetic voice.

"Your stick was thick, and your arm is fairly strong," said Lorton, drily.

"Ah! I cut that stick last season, out of a hedge near Market Harborough. I did not think then that it would do such good service, nor come to an end over that beast's back. Come, Lorton, let us go out."

As Lovell had said, Mr. Gascoyne took his punishment like a cur. He kept his bed some days, and as soon as he could "show," he went abroad, but did *not* ask Lovell to accompany him.

CHAPTER XV.

“Nature hath assigned
Two sovereign remedies for human grief,
Religion—surest, firmest, first, and best,
Strength to the weak, and to the wounded, balm—
And strenuous action next.”

SOUTHEY'S RODERICK.

THE tender, loving sympathy which surrounded Eveline in the society among which she was thus strangely and suddenly thrown, did much to calm her storm-tossed spirit. She soon found herself regarded as another daughter in that simple home where charity dwelt like a holy spirit, pervading every thought, word, and deed.

Religion was the axle-tree on which their wheel of life revolved, with a peace, a happiness, that none other can give; but Dr. Maitland's home was not dull, it was cheerful, even boisterously so sometimes, as a home is,

or ought to be, when young, happy, healthy people belong to it. Besides his daughters, Rose and Edith, he had three boys at school, who thought their sisters "bricks"—said that their father was A 1 among governors and men generally—and if they did not speak much of their mother, she was none the less the first to whom they rushed on coming home for the holidays, and the one in whose bosom were confided all their cares and boyish troubles.

The rectory was not without its little romance. Rose was engaged to her cousin, a sailor, but the marriage was not to take place until he had attained his post rank, "which he is sure to do soon," said the blushing Rose to Eveline, with love's unbounded belief in her sailor's merit, "he is such a first-rate officer that I am sure the Admiralty must think very highly of him."

Eveline was quite ready to endorse every encomium on Percy Maitland, but was not so sure about the Admiralty being equally enthusiastic without some little private pressure. But of this she said nothing, and evinced all proper surprise when Rose rushed to her one morning, flourishing a sheet of the *Times*, to show her a line in the army and navy intelligence. The

breathless girl could scarcely impart the news, but at last Mrs. Greville learnt that Commander Maitland was to be Post Captain!

The announcement *ought* to have shaken the world, but alas! it only caused—beyond the joy at the rectory—the shaking of heads of some long-standing commanders and lieutenants, who exclaimed bitterly—

“ Ah, the old story—interest, of course,” and they turned to their navy lists to see to their disgust that Captain Maitland was a commander of only eighteen months’ standing.

He was on the Mediterranean station, but would, of course, at once return, and Rose would be married before the new year, as Edith, the second daughter, half weeping at the thought of losing her sister, yet rejoicing in her happiness, would exclaim. It was September now, and Eveline had been domiciled in this place nearly three months.

The two girls adored her, as girls are apt to worship women older and of a higher class than themselves. Edith—a fair, gentle girl, about seventeen—bestowed the most undivided worship; Rose, as was natural, had her liege lord to think of, but the sparkling brunette would never have allowed that any one could love their dear Mrs. Greville better than she did.

Surrounded by such love and confidence, Eveline could not but feel happier ; but let it not be supposed that any miracle of sudden conversion was performed in her favour, and that she was instantaneously raised to a pitch of exalted faith and bliss. Such cases may occur among the uneducated and unthinking, where unbelief is the child of ignorance and of fanatic enthusiasm, and catches at anything that brings excitement. But Eveline had read and pondered too much and too deeply for her faith—which that reading had shaken—to return suddenly.

Light came and went ; and often, when her lamp burnt the brightest, doubts would arise, reducing her almost to despair. But by constant, earnest striving, and with the help of her excellent and judicious friend, Dr. Maitland, she gradually gained sufficient power over herself to resist the fatal fascination of speculating on, and toiling after, hidden truths and mysteries, and to gratefully accept the love and peace so bountifully offered. She learnt to be patient, humble, and cheerful—“ washing and making white the robes in which to array herself for standing before the Throne.”

But it was a hard trial (for what mortal can crush mortality out of his heart without a

most awful struggle?), and had it not been for active employment, which took her thoughts from self to others, she must have sunk under it.

There had been much sickness in the villages about when she first arrived—a sickness which caused a good deal of anxiety—and she eagerly seized on the occupation offered her, namely, nursing, helping, comforting, and consoling wherever she could. The sickness spread, and in a fortnight's time assumed the alarming form of an epidemic. The rector, unwilling to expose his wife and children to the infection, sent them to the seaside; but no arguments could prevail on Eveline to accompany them—she stood by her post. That impatience of inaction, which *some of us* have felt when we have swept our garden of all its flowers—others called them rue and wormwood; no matter, to *us* they were the roses and the lilies—that wild remorse which seeks some relief in self-inflicted penance, induced her to take upon herself painful and revolting duties, from which many a less delicate woman would have recoiled, with much the same feeling that impelled St. Simeon Stylites to live his weary years upon the pillar that “numbered forty cubits from the soil.”

Accustomed from her childhood to every luxury—physical, mental, and social—that wealth can procure, it was no light penance that the refined, high-born woman had taken on herself; but she shrank not, nor spared herself; and nobly did she fulfil her self-allotted task.

In vain did Dr. Maitland remonstrate, as day and night he would find her attending the worst cases, for ever indefatigable. “The discipline is good for me,” she would answer; “work keeps me from dwelling on shadows that cross my path with an awful blackness. I should sink, under inaction, to what I shudder to think of. Let me be. When you see me vainglorious, then shall you say, ‘Thus far and no farther.’” So he let her be; and truly no man ever had such help as that which she gave to him and to the surgeon. Her purse as well as her hands was ready, and many of the convalescents who would probably have sunk from the after-effects of the fever, were through her means restored to new life as it were, by inhaling the delicious breezes off the Atlantic Ocean; and when money failed, diamonds were sold to supply the want. A large house had been hired on the sea-coast, whither the patients were draughted when infection was over, and where

Mrs. Maitland and her daughters looked after them.

At last the storm was over, but Eveline did not relax in her labours, which, if less arduous, were still incessant. Dr. Maitland watched her with the anxiety of a father, often dreading lest her remorse should take the form of asceticism, yet fearing to interfere too much—knowing that an overcharged heart needs rest ere its equilibrium can be restored. He did not want her to act simply in consonance with his wishes, but he earnestly desired to see some returning symptoms of a more healthy tone of mind, and hailed with pleasure the Michaelmas holidays which would bring his boys home, hoping that the joyous surroundings of youth, health, and unbounded spirits would in some measure divert her from the rigid rule of life which she had laid down for herself.

The boys had never seen her, and were in considerable awe of her, but unanimously decided that she must be a “Mrs. Gamp”—an opinion that so offended Rose and Edith that they would not vouchsafe the smallest description of her ; and they secretly looked forward to the surprise that awaited them at Michaelmas.

Always fond of children, Eveline's sad, sweet face, and nameless fascination exercised their usual charm, and the boys fell—after the manner of their kind—straightway in love with one whom they had designated a second “Mrs. Gamp!” Than to be reminded of which, nothing made them more furious.

They vied with each other in doing homage to their queen—it was who should render her a service : and as for any pleasure, none was perfect without her.

Loath to cast a gloom over their beseeching faces—or unable to resist the pleading tone of “Michaelmas holidays are *so* short,” or “We had nothing of you last holidays, because of that beastly fever, you know,” or “It’ll be no fun if *you* don’t come”—she generally yielded ; and in giving others pleasure, found some herself. She neglected no duty, but Dr. Maitland was relieved to see that she was insensibly roused from the morbid state of mind into which she was falling.

One day, shortly before the boys returned to school, their indignation was greatly roused by seeing “a swell—an awful swell” in the village, making inquiries for Mrs. Greville.

“He has come to marry her and take her away,” was the rapid conclusion arrived at ;

and the youngest boy, an audacious young scamp about nine or ten—who had quite settled to marry Eveline directly he was old enough—determined to be the one to put the “spoke in his wheel,” as he called it; so, following him out of the shop—the general emporium—he accosted him.

“Were you asking where Mrs. Greville lives, sir?”

The lad’s frank, gentlemanly manner pleased the stranger, who answered with a smile that he had just been told.

“You won’t find her at home, sir. She’s gone to nurse an old woman—miles away.”

“Miles away! Nurse an old woman! But I suppose she will come home some time?”

“Well, perhaps she may,” said the boy, slowly, and longing to say, *never*. “Anyhow, if she does, it will be too late for you to see her, so there’s no use in your waiting.”

The gentleman laughed. He read the boy in a moment—the defiance in the flashing eyes and crimson cheeks showed that he would have done battle to the death for her, and the stranger was drawn to the little champion at once; he forbore teasing him, and said—

“I see that you are a friend of Mrs. Gre-

ville's, so am I—a very old friend. Let us shake hands, my boy.”

The lad looked up shyly at the good-looking man, and somehow—how it happened none of the three boys could have told—but not only were they all speedily on good terms, but on their way to the cricket-field, where a match was to be played that afternoon. The boys poured out their great trouble, namely, that their best bowler had broken his collar-bone, and they were dreadfully afraid of being beat in consequence.

Their new friend said he could bowl a little, and offered his services.

The “awful swell” bowling for their side! It was tremendous.

“Perhaps you belong to the Zingari, sir?” said the eldest boy, with a feeling of pleasant awe.

Yes, it was even so.

This was immense news, and great was the talk on cricket, but greater still the pride of having so distinguished a player on their side. He had become their property—one of themselves—he was a hero at least.

In the course of their walk he learnt all about them—about Captain Maitland, and, what was far dearer to him, about Mrs. Gre-

ville, her beauty, her goodness, her kindness ; but all this was told with bated breath and reverential feeling.

When they reached the rectory gate,

“Come in,” they cried, with ready hospitality and ignoring etiquette. “They will be delighted to see you,” they eagerly assured him.

Not seeing it in the same light, their friend was going off, promising to be found in the cricket-field at the appointed time, when Dr. Maitland came up.

“He is one of the Zingari, father, and he is going to bowl for us, and he is a friend of Mrs. Greville’s,” cried the boys, in a breath.

“A great claim on your gratitude, youngsters,” said Dr. Maitland, laughing, and lifting his hat to one in whom he at once recognised a gentleman. “A friend of Mrs. Greville’s needs no further introduction to any one beneath my roof,” he continued, holding out his hand. “I am Dr. Maitland, rector of this parish.

“My name is Lovell,” said the other, responding cordially, and walking up the garden with him.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ All the village train from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree—
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old survey'd ;
And many a gambol frolick'd o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round.”

THE DESERTED VILLAGE..

DR. MAITLAND had not overstated the welcome that all friends of Mrs. Greville's would find beneath his roof. Lovell found himself received so kindly, that he needed no pressing to share an early dinner, where two very pretty girls, and a sweet, gentle mother—still pretty in spite of her five-and-forty years and snow-white hair—were going to preside. They all had one theme in common, praise of Eveline. The girls were never tired of talking of her goodness, her unceasing kind acts, nor he of listening ; and as he listened, he felt more aggrieved than ever that Lorton had dragged

him off Gascoyne before he had punished him more severely.

When he was starting for the cricket-field, Mrs. Maitland asked him to return and spend the evening with them, when most probably Mrs. Greville would have returned. Needless to say that no second bidding was wanted.

The whole party went down to the cricket-field where the boys carried off their hero in triumph. At the further end a little scene occurred, which enhanced him for ever in their estimation. Two lads were fighting, and the curate was endeavouring to separate them, lecturing them the while on their wickedness.

“Hullo,” cried Lovell, “what’s the matter?”

“He called me a sneak, sir!” cried one of the flushed assailants, preparing for another onslaught.

“Let them fight it out,” said Lovell, interrupting the curate, who was holding one of the struggling boys by the arm; “they are well-matched—they will never be friends if they don’t. We will see fair play.”

The curate walked away greatly scandalised, and the two combatants set to again with infinite better feeling than before. Presently one had had enough.

“Will you ever call me a sneak again?” asked the conqueror.

“No,” said the other, picking himself up.

“Well then, shake hands, old fellow.”

“That’s right, my boy,” said Lovell, clapping him on the shoulder; “and you,” turning to the other, “shake hands. It is never beneath a man to own himself in the wrong when he knows it.”

The boy looked at him. “Would you?” said he.

“Of course I would,” said Lovell, returning the look frankly and seriously, “and be good friends in future with the man whom I had wrongfully blamed.”

Not only the two boys, but a crowd of others who had collected, had their eyes fixed on the “gentleman,” waiting for the fiat which he was to pronounce. It was received with a certain amount of awe as the authority of gentlemen; it carried weight; and the two late combatants at once made friends.

“I didn’t really think you a sneak,” and “I didn’t mean to hit so hard,” was said simultaneously.

“There’s something to bind up your wounds with,” said Lovell, laughing, and

throwing them half-a-sovereign as the boys were going off together.

The curate, who had returned when the fray was over, was shocked—rewarding such conduct ! it was unheard of !

“The most quarrelsome boys in the place,” said he, “and sons of respectable farmers too. They are always fighting.”

“And never had it out, I dare say,” said Lovell. “They are not bad boys ; depend upon it they will not fight again in a hurry.”

As time proved to the curate.

The Maitland boys were enchanted. This was verily a man after their own heart ; but there was no time to discuss such matters now, as a more important fight was about to begin ; and here be it said that they scored enormously, and carried the game by a fabulous innings. It was late in the afternoon when the boys accompanied Lovell to the public-house—inn it could not be called, although dignified by the name of “The Courtenay Arms”—(where he had left the horse and dog-cart in which he had driven over) to see if he could get a bed there, for with provident foresight he had brought his bag.

“You approve of fighting, sir ?” asked the elder boy.

“Well, I have had many a fight at Eton, my boy, and I don’t think we were ever the worse friends for it.”

“I do love a jolly fight!” exclaimed the youngest, *con gusto*; “they allow fighting at our school. The usher tries to stop us, but I know the master is on our side, for he said to one of our fellows once, ‘Don’t fight if you can help it, for I don’t like it; but at any rate shake hands afterwards.’”

“A capital rule, too,” said Lovell, with happy oblivion of Mr. Gascoyne, as, followed by his admiring retinue, he entered the bar and preferred his request.

“I shall see you again, my darling!” thought he, as, somewhat later, he was turning his things out of his bag in a heap on the floor, after the manner of men, for he was dressing to go to the Maitlands. “I wonder what she will say to my coming? Where’s that rascal put my brushes?” and Captain Lovell kicked his clothes over till he found what he was in quest of. “Well, there is no use in thinking. I shall know to-morrow,” and he applied a pair of very hard brushes vigorously to his locks. “That scoundrel Gascoyne!” and the brushes went harder than ever, till it suddenly occurred to him that it was

his own and not Mr. Gascoyne's head that he was punishing, so he finished his coiffure more temperately.

Mrs. Greville was not at the rectory when he arrived there, but while they were at tea there was a sound of wheels crunching the gravel in front of the house.

"There she is," cried the boys, tumbling out of the room to go and meet her—a proceeding that Captain Lovell greatly envied. A head came in at the door.¹

"She won't come in, father ; she wants to see you—old Betsy is very bad, and she is very tired, and I am going home with her," and the head, after uttering this very coherent speech, all in a breath, disappeared.

The doctor went out, and Mrs. Maitland saw the look of disappointment which Lovell in vain tried to conceal over his cup of tea. She felt sorry for the good-looking young man who was so evidently in love with their favourite, and she said she would go and see what was the matter.

What persuasions she used did not appear, certainly not Captain Lovell's name, for she did not mention that till they were coming downstairs from her room, where Eveline had gone to take her bonnet off, and then she said,

“Do you know a Captain Lovell, my dear?”

“Yes, very well ; but I have not seen him for a long time.”

“He is here, drinking tea with us.”

“Really ; I did not know that he was a friend of yours,” said Eveline, quietly. “I suppose then that it is he who was the ‘regular cheese at cricket,’ of whom the boys have been telling me.”

CHAPTER XVII.

“Adieu, thou darling of my heart,
Whom never more these eyes shall view,
Yet once again before we part,
Nymph of my soul ! again adieu.

“Yet one kiss more, this kiss, the last
That I will ask, or thou shalt give,
Tho’ on my lips it dies too fast,
Shall always in my memory live.”

RUSSEL.

LOVELL never knew what he said or did when the door opened and Eveline once more stood before him. But how changed from the Eveline of his dreams!—the Eveline whom he had last seen, and wooed, and lost—resplendent with all the pomp of wealth—glittering with diamonds—flushed with health and pleasure—sparkling with joy and happiness.

Very lovely, very beautiful, was the pale,

sorrow-stricken woman who stood there—the shadow of her former self. Her close-fitting gown showed the havoc that suffering had made on her once matchless figure; too perfectly moulded to be ever other than graceful, all the glorious symmetry of womanhood had faded away, leaving only a slight, girlish figure. The once rounded, blushing cheek was thin and wan—the large, lustrous blue eyes were undimmed and lovely as ever, with the same tender, wistful look as of old, but, surrounded by hollow circles, they looked preternaturally large in the wan face in which they were set—the sweet mouth no longer dimpled in smiles; so sad a one quivered over it as she greeted Lovell, that a lump rose in his throat, and, speechless, he lifted the little hand to his lips with a tender reverence for the woman who in her suffering was even dearer to him than in her hour of joy and prosperity. And later, when he was sitting by her side as she lay very tired on the sofa, many a time was he compelled to turn from the small, wan face framed as it were by the golden masses of her hair—luxuriant as ever—to Dr. Maitland, in order to keep his voice “full-toned,” and not “leap forth” in the bitter cry of his heart as he gazed on the piteous wreck before him.

"Pamela has promised to pay me a visit very soon," Eveline was saying to him. "It will be such a pleasure to see her again! and the Montserrats have kindly promised to make a *détour* this way and meet their yacht at Barnstaple. I am very anxious that my dear friend, Dr. Maitland, should become acquainted with them. He and the duke will be mutually charmed, I know."

"What swells we shall have in the place!" said one of her young lovers, perched on the back of the sofa, where he had, unknown to Eveline, got possession of one of her long curls. "I hope they will come before we go back to school—I never saw a duchess. I suppose she is awfully grand."

Lovell and all the young Maitlands, Rose and Edith included, walked home with Eveline, and she, still under the impression that he was a friend of the people at the rectory, guessed not what had brought him down, till on bidding her good-night, he asked to be allowed to call next morning, and there was that in his voice which told her why he had come. She did not refuse, but anxious to spare him mortification, she sent a note in the morning to Edith, asking her to breakfast and spend the day with her.

One word here for Mrs. Jones. When Eveline told her that she purposed living in that little Devonshire cottage, the abigail announced her engagement to the duke's steward, and enriched by a munificent gift and some very handsome gowns, the marriage took place, and the *ci-devant* Mrs. Jones became "quite the lady," as her friends assured her. And now farewell to Mrs. Jones.

It was a considerable disappointment to Lovell when he called the next day—full of hope—to find that Eveline was not alone. He waited in the vain expectation of seeing Miss Maitland depart—she evidently had not the least intention of gratifying him : but he was near the woman he loved, and basking in the sunshine of that presence, he was happy and well content to wait. After luncheon, the whole party from the rectory came, and they all sallied forth to enjoy the beautiful autumn afternoon. Then came a late dinner at the Maitlands, in honour of the new guest, and night came round again, and no word had been spoken.

Why can we never let well alone ? Why do we rush blindly on our fate when the finger-post right before us is pointing in another direction ? I fancy that the prophet of old

has not been the only one who has gone up from Moab, to gaze on the land flowing with milk and honey. How many of us, since those fifty-nine centuries, have looked down with longing eyes from Pisgah on to Gilead, and deaf to the warning "thou shalt not go over thither," have come to bitter grief along the forbidden road !

Undeterred by Eveline's marked determination not to allow anything like a *tête-à-tête*, Lovell sought her the next day. He watched the road that led to her door, and seeing Miss Maitland coming down it, he made good his cause and secured the interview that he was resolved to have.

But it was in vain that he pleaded his love, his hopeless life without her. She never intended to marry, she told him ; but he, believing her pure as driven snow, and knowing how sorely she needed a husband's name to protect her from the world's wickedness and from evil tongues, urged his suit with a fervour that was as much for her sake as for his own. He dwelt on the miserable existence to which she was condemning herself—that was killing her by inches, contrasting it with what their future might be—spoke eloquently of his un-failing love—his soul-felt tenderness that

should guard her from the very shadow of evil; and seeing her weep, he gained further courage, and more urgently pressed his cause.

She did indeed weep, for her heart was young and warm, and her nature was clinging and affectionate; and she wept to think that between her and earthly happiness stood an impassable barrier—she was deeply touched by his unwavering constancy, by his chivalrous devotion, and something warmer than mere friendship woke up in her heart and pleaded for him.

For a moment she looked up at him with a wild longing to tell him everything, and leave their fate in his hands. He saw the look—saw that there was something weighing on her, and with infinite tenderness drew her unresisting form to his arms as though to shield her even then.

“Darling, what is it? Will you not tell me?” he whispered. “Do I vex you? I had not meant to speak of my love again, but life is so dreary without you. I am not worthy of you; but such as I am, will you take me?—will you bless my life? Do not weep, my darling, but give me the right to comfort you—the right to protect you.”

“Too good—too generous,” she murmured,

withdrawing herself from his arms ; “ but it cannot be. I shall never marry. Why, oh ! why did you seek me again ? ”

“ Why did I seek you ? Does a starving man see rich abundance before him and not seek to grasp it ? You do not know what love is, or you would not ask that question.”

Not know what love is ? God help him !

“ You are right,” she said, meekly ; “ I do not know—I shall never know what love is, for I have resolved on the life I intend to follow. I am not strong—death is, I feel, busy within me, and my only wish is to spend the time left me in the work that seems to have been carved out for me.”

The momentary weakness had passed from her, and though her voice was gentle, not an echo of hope lingered in it.

“ I cannot tell you how sorry I am for you, and I can do nothing : but will you forgive me,” she pleaded, “ and let us part friends ? As long as I live I shall remember you with affection and kindness ; and I shall never forget that when I was in sickness, in suffering, in poverty, you still sought the woman who in her time of prosperity caused you some sorrow. Will you forgive me ? ”

Lovell’s heart was very full ; he dared not

trust his voice to answer the sweet, beseeching tones, but took both her hands and bowed his face upon them.

“Farewell, dear Captain Lovell; it is scarcely probable that we shall ever meet again, but I shall never forget you, and, wherever you may be, I most earnestly say, may God bless you!”

He bent his knee for one moment, kissed the hem of her robe, and left the room with all his manhood well-nigh crushed out of him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Not only for this nether world
Were wreaths of friendship bound,
When the great scroll shall be unfurled
Its worth shall sure be found.”

FROM THE GERMAN OF MEISTER.

LADY GAVESTON was shocked beyond words to see the ravages that a few months had made in her friend ; she did not pause to ask whence the sorrow that had thus consumed her—that made the smile on the pale lips so sad that tears would have been less mournful—or why the heavy penance she was inflicting on herself. She saw in the sorrow-stricken woman before her, the friend she loved and without a word they were sobbing in each other's arms.

Strange to say, Eveline was the first to recover herself. It was a great joy seeing her friend again ; and she dried her tears and

hovered round her with a thousand loving little cares, showing Pamela how very *very* glad she was to be with her again.

“How good it is to have you again with me,” said Eveline, as somewhat later they sat together in the approaching dark. “It reminds me of the old days at Llanfenydd.”

“Would that they would come back,” returned Pamela.

“Not to go through the same life again,” said Eveline, with an irrepressible shudder. “Life is too sad, too terrible, to be lived a second time.”

“Surely not,” said Lady Gaveston. “My only grief is to see the days pass by, knowing that each one is the grave of some happiness—that every morrow brings me nearer to that one, when *one of us* must go. How gladly would I live the last few years over again! I am so happy.”

“May you ever be so, dearest,” said Eveline, warmly, and looking affectionately at her friend. “If any one deserves the happiness he possesses, it is you.”

“I do not think that happiness is meted out according to deserts,” said Lady Gaveston, “if it were there would be a good many changes in the world; nor do I believe that it

is equally divided. Here are we—without a sorrow—without a cloud on our horizon—everything prospers with us—our children,” here Pamela went off at a tangent: “I should like for you to see our little Eveline, she is *such* a pet, I think she will be like you.”

“God forbid!” exclaimed Eveline, involuntarily.

“Why that pious ejaculation?” laughed Pamela. “She is quite a Gaveston, and she could hardly be a fairer one than her namesake.”

“I am sorry you christened her Eveline. I begged you not. I have a superstition about names and likenesses in families. I think that fate knows us by our looks. I am very like my father—*his* life was not an enviable one; and, God knows, mine has not been one to wish for your child. By the way, is it not strange that I should have lighted on my father’s old tutor? I am so anxious that you should know him. He is too clever a man to be left here, where not a single educated being counts among his parishioners. His wife and daughters are simple-minded lady-like women, an acquisition in any parish.”

“I will talk to Gaveston about him. The Premier is going to Beaumanoir next month,

and we will have Dr. Maitland to meet him. And you, Eveline, when are you coming to us? I long to put you in mamma's hands to nurse you back to health. You are looking wretchedly. When will you come?"

"Never."

"Never?" repeated Pamela. "You are surely not going to immure yourself for the rest of your days in this place, where, by your own showing, there is not an educated person to speak to? Why sacrifice your youth, your beauty, your health, in nursing those villagers—wasting your talents on those who cannot appreciate them? Why immolate yourself thus? You cannot like it."

"Yet it has its pleasures," replied Eveline, evasively, "and the people are fond of me."

"Undoubtedly. You fill them with good things, and they kiss the hand that feeds them; but withdraw the supplies, and see what gratitude remains."

"And is there so much then in other classes where there is no plea of want?" said Eveline, sadly. "Look into the world, and ask yourself who will not spurn the hand they fawned on, when misfortune incapacitates it from ministering to their *vanity*—not their *wants*? Gratitude and love are not the results of

our actions, but the spontaneous children of the heart. I do believe this. Were I to lose my last shilling, many of the poorest here would willingly share with me their own mite.—Of how many of our rich friends can you and I say that they would of their abundance spare to our need? When I was rich and powerful I had the world at my feet—had I committed sacrilege, excuses would have been found for me; but when I was ruined, except yourselves and a few others, who came near me? The plague of poverty was on me, and I was shunned. I never told you of the mortifications I met with, but they showed me that I had nothing more to do with the world to which I had once belonged. No, I am happier here. The life is *bornée*, it is true, but I can do some good, and that is a pleasure in itself.”

“What brought you here? such an extraordinary place to get to,” said Pamela, waiving the discussion.

“Sick of mankind I sought solitude; chance brought me here, and circumstances kept me.”

“And do you really mean to forsake the friends who love you?” said Lady Gaveston, reproachfully.

“Oh, do not tempt me, Pamela. The only

painful part of this 'immolation,' as you call it, is the separation from you and the duchess; but I know that you are happy, and I must learn to make that suffice me."

"Dear Eveline, this is too sad, and when I think of what might have been!"

"That is a melancholy retrospection, Pamela. Do you remember these lines?"

'She took up the burden of life again,
Saying only, 'It might have been.'
But of all sad words of tongue or pen
The saddest are these, 'It might have been.'"

What more futile, more sad, than pining over a lost past—a shadow that has fled with the day?"

"If, to use your own simile, no shadow could fall again. But when we know that the rising morn will bring another, why shut our eyes to it? why refuse to see the sunshine? Ah, Eveline, if you will only believe me, there is much happiness in store for you if you will but accept it. By the way, did I tell you that Captain Lovell's old uncle died about a month ago, and after having hated him simply because he was his natural heir, has left him, *faute de mieux*, all his property?"

"Doubly generous!" murmured Eveline.
"No, I did not know it."

“Did you hear of his adventure with a Mr. Gascoyne?—a snob, Lorton says. He beat him in the club *au beau milieu* of all his *confrérie*—beat him with a big stick—and then offered him the same little pastime every day in the week. My brother says that if they had not dragged them apart, there would have been murder.”

“I never should have thought that Captain Lovell was aggressive.”

“He was in this instance. It appears that he detected Mr. Gascoyne cheating at cards, and some high words passed, which he resented; but Lorton tells me that from something he said to him he knew that the real cause was Mr. Gascoyne’s having taken a lady’s name in vain.”

It was too dark for Pamela to see the waxen hue that spread over Eveline’s face, and she continued,

“I saw him the other day and congratulated him on his inheritance; but he was anything but elated, and only said, ‘I had plenty to live on before, and all the rest is worthless to me unless she would share it with me,’ and so I advised him to come down here and tell you so. You will not be angry if he comes?”

“He has been.”

“Oh, Eveline! you have not sent him away?”

“Pamela,” said Eveline, with a gasp, “would you have me bring to my husband—the man who offers me a true, generous, undivided love—a dead, a loveless heart? You are fond of Captain Lovell: you can hardly wish him a sadder fate than to be linked to a woman, who, at best, can give him but gratitude. He is young, generous, and warm-hearted, and deserves a better fate. I know what you are going to say”—interrupting the other who was about to speak—“but it would not be so. There are some griefs which nothing can mitigate—some wounds which no balm can heal—and a broken heart is one. Dear Pamela, never let us speak of this again.” Eveline rose to her feet as she said this, and lightly kissed her friend’s forehead. “Dinner will be ready directly, let me take you to your room.”

CHAPTER XIX.

“On him they hung,
Their law his eye, their oracle his tongue.”

POPE'S ESSAY ON MAN.

“Ay—but who is it?”

AS YOU LIKE IT.

A FEW days after Lady Gaveston had departed, the village was thrown into tremendous excitement by the unwonted sight of a carriage, with four horses and postilions, which dashed through it, and pulled up with a clatter before Mrs. Greville's little cottage.

The Duke and Duchess of Montserrat !

The news spread like wildfire, and so great a crowd collected around, that Eveline sent down a note to Dr. Maitland, who came up and dispersed the throng, and presently he and the duke sallied forth leaving the two ladies alone.

An important consultation was at once

held at the Courtenay Arms, to decide whether or no an address should be presented. The chief personage in the place was the grocer, who likewise was the baker, the draper, and stationer, to which functions he added those of undertaker and postmaster, in virtue of which he was generally accredited with a great knowledge of human nature and of politics; in short, he was much looked up to, was Mr. Blewett, except by the cobbler—the radical of the place—and “he didn’t hold, he didn’t, with people who set themselves up above others, for why? for their filthy wealth. Give him—Joe Solem—give *him* brains, and all men equal.”

In deference to the present occasion Mr. Blewett appeared at the meeting in his mourning attire; he had had some doubts as to the propriety of wearing his hat-band as giving more solemnity to the discussion—for he felt the importance of his position—but his wife settled that matter with her mother wit. She had asked what was an address? The philosopher was for a moment posed, but presently replied that it was a welcome.

“Lor, Jim, then yew wewdn’t go for tew put on weepers for them as yew welcome,” an

unanswerable argument which made her spouse feel that he had no common order of being in his better half.

He found the shoemaker in full harangue ; *he* had not dressed for the occasion ; he appeared in his leathern apron and shirt-sleeves rolled up above his elbows, in open rebellion with the respect proposed to be shown to the aristocracy.

“ What is the aristocracy ? ” he was saying as Mr. Blewett, calm, dignified, with an inward conviction that he represented that maligned class, entered the public-house. “ What is the aristocracy ? I says—a parcel of proud upstarts, who have got the land as belongs to *we*—The People ! who would grind *we* under their bloated heels ! Down with them all, and let *we*, who makes England what she is, have the glory ! ”

The breath of his audience was fairly taken away by sentiments more ultra-radical than had ever been uttered in their hearing, even by their present orator. They were dumb-founded, and looked at each other in silent awe. Mr. Blewett here stepped on the scene and thus rebuked them.

“ What, my friends,” said he, more in sorrow than in anger, “ do I stand here to find

you, patriotic Englishmen—the bulwarks of the Throne and State—to find you listening—without a word—to abuse of our noble Queen, our Sovereign Lady—and the nobility which makes England what it is, the Queen of the world ?” (Immense applause.) “What would any of you give for a *parly voo* count ? Is he to be compared to our own dukes whom we have this day met to honour ?” (No, no ! great cheering, “Down with the Frenchman !”) “By all means, gentlemen. If ever the French attempt to cross our element—the sea—and attack our—our freeboard,” he was not quite certain as to his word, but he was sure that he had heard it, besides it had a fine piratical smack about it, and it rounded off his sentence well—and no one objected—“why then, down with the French, say I ; and led by the noblest in the land we will defend our homes—our sacred hearths, to our last drop of blood ! Ay, every man, woman and child of us !” Immense cheering. In imagination they were all heroes at that moment. The shoemaker was nowhere. “As for you, Mr. Solem,” addressing the radical, “I am sorry for *you*. All I say is—your sentiments are unbecoming your—your—I was about to say cloth, gentlemen,” glancing with conscious

pride at his own garments, "but I perceive our friend has only leather."

The laugh turned the scales, and a resolution was passed in favour of an address, as being patriotic, and showing respect to her Majesty.

The shoemaker was still of opinion that such a proceeding was unconstitutional, but he was overruled. The glory of having a real live duke and duchess in their own village, to say nothing of the viscountess who had just left them, was very great, so the proposition was unanimously carried, and the address forthwith put in hand, but alas! for the glory of its promoters, before it was ready, the duke and duchess were on board their yacht and far away. The address, however, after many alterations and amendments, was finished to the satisfaction of all parties, so as to be ready for another such contingency—they ought to have been ready for this one; they felt that, but a second time should find them not unprepared—and a copy of it was duly wafered over the mantelpiece in the tap-room of the Courtenay Arms, where it was read aloud by such as could read, and listened to by the rest with swelling pride to think that they were the authors of this master-

piece of eloquence. The winding up, in which the rector's motto, *semper fidelis*, was brought in, was, however, the climax, and was invariably requested to be read over again as the listeners smoked their pipes in silence.

Even the shoemaker, "though he objected to the sentiment on constitutional grounds," admitted that "that bit o' Latin comes in very neat."

Presently the silence would again be broken by some one pointing to the document with the end of his pipe—taken from his lips for the purpose—"Jest read me that part again, where my name cumes in." So the list of the "undersigned" would be read over again, and listened to with the profound attention it deserved.

Her grace's footman got the largest share of the glory attending ducal visits. No notice had been taken of the quiet, middle-aged gentleman who had walked through the village with the rector. *He* was nobody—they wanted to see the duke, *they* did; and as fine feathers make fine birds, no sooner did the footman in all the glory of six-foot-two of red plush and silk stockings make his appearance, looking for a public-house, and followed by a troop of children, than he was at once

declared to be the duke ; and admiring glances followed him from the women who stood on their thresholds, some with their arms akimbo, some with babies in them.

“ Lor, he du be grand !” exclaimed one, “ an’ he be all alone tu.”

“ I take it the likes of him be tu fine tu walk in company.”

“ Lor, Jemimer, he give me a wink !” cried a rosy-cheeked damsel, ducking behind the shoulder over which she had been peeping.

“ Get away, yew hussy, du. I dun’t believe he’s the dewk at all. I believe he’s a sodger with them red un-speak-of-’ems on.”

“ Be yew the dewk, sir ?” asked some of the bolder urchins, more than once, provoking thereby the reply,

“ Drat your imperence, I’ll duke you,” and the unintentional impostor walked into the Courtenay Arms.

What manner of punishment *dukeing* might be was not very clear, but it was soon ascertained that he was not the great man. Who he could be was another thing.

“ He’s a beetle come dune with them,” said one.

“ No, he bean’t a beetle,” said another, better informed, “ a beetle wears a cocked

hat. I saw one wunce at Exeter. I tell yew what he is, he's the Lord Mayor of Lunedon," a popular theory which was readily accepted, till it was known what he really was, and then great was the fall of Jeames! The jackdaw and the peacock over again.

Later in the afternoon, the rector again appeared with his friend, and they entered to Mr. Blewett, who to his dying day never forgot the honour done him. Indeed, so overwhelmed was he, that for three days after the duke's visit, Mr. Blewett was not to be seen in the usual evening resort. A man who had conversed with a duke could not mix with the common herd. It was not to be expected; nor beyond saying that "his grace was the haffablest of gentlemen" could anything be extracted from Mr. Blewett. On the fourth day, however, he was again seen in his place; and gradually relaxing from his reticence, he enlarged on his interview with "the duke," who, it would appear, had been extremely communicative about the state of England—her home and foreign policy; and as time wore on it oozed out that he had told Mr. Blewett in confidence—"he would not say so much to any one else, but he did not mind telling Mr. Blewett—that her Majesty was

very anxious about the state of the country, but she knew that she had faithful subjects in Crewkerne." In short, the Duke of Montserrat would have been considerably astonished had he known of the confidential interview which he evidently had granted to that favoured mortal, Mr. Blewett, who, from that time, altered his chronology. Henceforth it was "in the year of his grace's visit," or "It may have been three years after his grace said to me, 'Mr. Blewett,' says he," &c., &c.

It was an epoch in the annals of Crewkerne not likely to be forgotten.

CHAPTER XX.

“It is very natural for a young friend and a young lover to think the persons they love have nothing to do but to please them.”—POPE.

“No part of conduct asks for skill more nice,
Though none more common, than to give advice.”
SHAKESPEARE.

THE excitement attendant on these august visits had scarcely time to cool, when the rectory was again thrown into delightful commotion by the arrival of Captain Maitland, a cheery, frank-hearted sailor, who infused fresh life into everybody around him. Even Eveline, subdued and saddened as she was, felt the influence of his happy, buoyant nature. On reporting himself at the Admiralty, he had been chaffed about the pretty widow who took so much interest in him, which of course told the secret of his unexpected promotion, but which did not lessen the tender

homage he paid to the frail, delicate woman who was fond of his Rose, and to whom—though he was not to reveal this to his bride-elect—she had given a dowry of two thousand pounds.

With a sailor's impetuosity, he did not see why he and Rose should not be married then and there ; whereat the ladies, whose thoughts wandered off to the trousseau, were greatly scandalised. Dr. Maitland would not part with his child till after Christmas, so a very happy party settled down at the rectory. Rose had her lover near her, and was among all the dear ones whom she loved—what more was wanting to complete her happiness ? But after ten days of this unmixed delight, Dr. Maitland insisted on his nephew going away, and spending the intervening two months among his own friends. It was a dreadful hardship.

"Percy don't want to go, papa," remonstrated Rose, with tears in her dark eyes.

"I don't suppose he does, my dear ; but he will love you none the less for sending him to his own people for awhile, and making him seek the occupations and wholesome life natural to his age. And is it not better for my little Rose to see her lover depart reluc-

tantly now, than to see him *wish* to go, which he would at the end of a month? Two months will pass quickly—all too quickly for us who are to lose our little Rosebud.”

“How ungrateful I seem!” cried Rose, in great contrition. “It is not that I wish to leave you, dearest father, only if we could all live together.”

Dr. Maitland laughed.

“And how long do you think you could keep your sailor here with nothing to do but to make love to you? Percy is very fond of you, but a man can’t pass his life in making love. He must be up and stirring, busy about his work, and feel that he can come home to a loving, sensible wife who loves to see in her husband a man worthy the name of one—not a milksop who can sit all day at her feet, winding her skeins of wool, or doing patchwork.”

Rose did not say so, but she thought that she would very much like to have her sailor at her feet all day. However, Dr. Maitland was inexorable, and the lover was sent away till he was to return to be made the happiest of men.

Not long after Captain Maitland’s departure, Pamela wrote to Eveline enclosing a note

for the rector asking him to Beaumanoir. She told her that they were expecting the Premier, and that as Eveline was anxious for Dr. Maitland's promotion, she must make him come to them. "I hear that the Bishop of M—— is in a very bad way, and if your friend charms Lord —— as much as he has myself and the Duke of Montserrat, who knows but what the mitre may fall to him. But don't breathe a syllable of this to the Maitlands, for it is purely my imagination, only I rather believe in woman's prescience, as you know. He will be asked to preach : you know all the people who are coming (is it quite hopeless to expect you? and quite hopeless to send my father's and mother's entreaties?) so you can put him *en pays de connaissance*. Dr. Maitland don't look like a man who would be nervous preaching even before the Primate, so use your own judgment about telling him that the Premier will 'sit under him.' Isn't that the term?"

Dr. Maitland gladly accepted the invitation. In the retired life that he led, the thought of brushing his intellects against those of clever, educated men, was very refreshing; and among the guests whom he would meet, he found that several of them had been at Oxford with himself. This was very delightful, and

the ladies indulged in ambitious hopes of a good living for him—hopes which he checked, saying in perfect good faith, that the pleasure of meeting cultivated men again was quite sufficient in itself. His letters from Beaumanoir were charming, but as he playfully told his wife, he had not seen any livings growing on rose-bushes, waiting to be plucked : and to Eveline he wrote very tenderly, telling her what pleasure it was to him to find how greatly she was beloved by every one at Beaumanoir. He told her of the refreshment this visit was to him—of the, to him, rare delight of meeting cultivated men, and that he and Lord —— had many a passage of arms over Homer and Virgil : in short, the rector was fully enjoying his holiday.

It was during this absence that on taking up the paper one day, Eveline read among the births and deaths the following:—"The wife of Henry Vandeleur, of a son," in one place, and lower down, the death of Helen, his youngest daughter.

The paper dropped from her hand. The child she had been so fond of—whom she had tended so dearly—had gone to its rest.

"Poor darling ! happier thus—far happier," said Eveline ; "would that I were equally fit to die and be at rest."

Was it with quite unmixed feelings that she turned to the other paragraph? She had not forgotten Vandeleur. What woman who has loved with every fibre of her heart—with such intensity as to have centred in the one loved one every thought, hope, wish—loved so deeply as to feel that *that one alone* made *all* her world—what woman who has thus loved, even though that love were a crime and ending in disgrace, has succeeded in banishing from her thoughts the memory of him who has been at once her heaven and her hell?

She had not forgotten him, but she had ceased to yearn for his presence and ceased to be bitter. As her love for heavenly things increased, so did all earthly things lose their taint of mortality, and as she more deeply felt her sins against heaven, so did she learn to forgive the one against herself, and to pray that both might be pardoned at last.

But his name still had power to agitate her; she thought of him in his joy and in his sorrow; and separated as they were for ever, she asked herself why should she not write to condole with and congratulate him?

She knew that he had never been a religious man, but there was everything in

those two short lines to incline his heart to gentle feelings. Would it do any good if she, who had suffered so much, were to tell him of the peace that was coming to her?

Had Dr. Maitland been at home she would have asked his advice, but he was not there and she wrote.

In due time she got her answer. He thanked her for her sympathy about the death of his daughter, who had been ailing some months, and for her congratulations on the birth of his son, who, with its mother, was going on well. As to the other portion of her letter he was very glad to hear that she had found peace and happiness, but he could not help thinking that she was not quite the person to write to him on religious subjects, and he remained hers sincerely.

The blow was keen, but not all unsalutary. It made her look more closely into her own heart, and she saw that the glory of Him above had not alone actuated her in writing. Anxiety for Vandeleur and a longing for his repentance and welfare, had at least as much to do with it. The verdict was guilty, and she did not spare herself.

“I might have got vain-glorious and puffed up, had I touched him; and he truly says,

what right have *I* to teach others, when I could not guide myself? The lesson is hard, but not unwholesome."

When Dr. Maitland returned he found her gone back to all the austerities that she could practise. The quiet evenings at the rectory, interrupted by bad weather, had never been resumed, and had given place to watchings, fastings, and prayer; and the days were spent in the cottages of the poor, helping and relieving body and mind. It was curious to see how much more eagerly she was welcomed than the "rector's lady," who had been among them for five and twenty years. Her sweet, sad face never reproved—she never rebuked peevish complaints, but listened with gentle sympathy to every grievance, and beguiled their weary hours with anecdotes or with reading them amusing books. And then the rustle of her silk dress, the soft fur of her sealskin jacket, the sheen of her golden curls, the tiny gloves that she took off in their cottages, all had an invisible charm for the bed-ridden old crones to whom such things were as glimpses of another world.

It must have struck many of us in our visits to the poor, how fascinated they all are by the description in St. John's Revelation of the

gorgeousness, the gold, the precious stones, all the splendour of the New Jerusalem. All this material beauty, of which they can form no idea but by their own imaginings—which is so at variance with the poverty and squalor that surrounds them—goes a long way with them in their ideas of heaven—of all that is most desirable ; and it affords them a great pleasure to see a lady who is entitled to such (for the poor have a keen perception of the fitness of things) enter their cots wearing handsome clothes. In talking of “the lady,” by which name Eveline was always designated, one would tell another how she came in “her beautiful gowns, never afraid of spoiling them in their houses,” and this unconscious homage had a great charm for those who lived in rags.

Christmas had come and gone, the boys were home again, and Rose’s wedding-day was at hand. On New Year’s Day, a most important looking missive lay on the rector’s table awaiting his return—large, sealed with the royal arms, and altogether great with destiny. Everybody went to have a peep at it—to hold the precious document for a moment in their hands—“Did Mrs. Greville think it was from the Queen herself?”

"No, not exactly from the Queen," said Mrs. Greville with a smile.

"You do know what it is, *do* tell us!" was shouted around her.

No, Mrs. Greville would not tell—she did not know. She certainly had her notions about the letter, but she might be wrong—they must wait till their father returned, which in due course he did, and presently he sent for his wife, and then the agitation rose to the highest point. Then Mrs. Maitland came back in tears and clasped Eveline in her arms.

"My dear, dear child, what do we not owe you?" she cried.

"Is it so? is it M.?" said Eveline, smiling.

"It is indeed," sobbed Mrs. Maitland.

"I am *so* glad! no one will fill it as nobly."

The young people were alarmed. Was it joy—was it sorrow? It could not be anything bad, for Mrs. Greville looked very pleased, but she glided away almost directly, whispering to Rose as she passed her, "A stranger intermeddleth not with our joy." And then Mrs. Maitland told them that their father had been offered the bishopric of M.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Some solitary cloister will I choose,
And there with holy virgins live immured."

DRYDEN.

"If e'en by words can be exprest
The mind of man when broken-hearted,
Or sighs, or tears console the breast
From what it loves for ever parted ;
Then every grief I have to tell,
'Mid sighs just breathed, and tears just started,
Read thou in this wild word—Farewell.

ANON.

THE last day of Rose Maitland's maiden life had come, and she and Eveline were standing together, for the last time, in Rose's room.

"It seems so ungrateful to cry like this," sobbed Rosa, looking round the empty places of many simple little treasures.

"I think it would be more ungrateful to a very happy past if you could leave your old home without a tear. It must indeed be a

cold heart that can forget past joys in the prospect of new ones, my Rose; and though your father will be placed in a position worthy of him, and though my little friend is going to a husband who will love her dearly, it ought not to lessen the sorrow of leaving her childhood's home, knowing that strangers are coming to it. But we have talked long enough of sad things, let me give you my present which you must wear to-morrow. You will not prize them less for their having been worn by me, I know."

"Indeed no," said Rose, "a faded ribbon of yours would be precious in my sight."

"It is not a faded ribbon, at all events," said Eveline, smiling, as she put into her hands an *écrin* containing a pearl necklace, with a diamond locket, and ear-rings to match; "they belonged to my own sweet mother, and to no one less good and true than yourself would I give them, for she was a saint upon earth."

"She could not have been a greater saint than her daughter," cried Rose, warmly.

Eveline shrunk back, as though she had been struck. "Never say that, my child. Open the case, and see if you like the trinkets."

Rose looked at the jewels like one in a dream. The only trinkets that she possessed

were one or two simple little ornaments that her sailor-lover had given her, and the splendour of these bewildered her. She shut the case, and gave it back.

"Far, far too splendid a gift for you to bestow on me," said she, "and besides which, you will want them some day yourself. It is too generous of you, but it would not be right of me to despoil you of such jewels. I know that my father would agree with me."

"Take them with my fondest wishes, dear child; I shall never need jewels again. I had not intended to have told you, but as we are alone for the last time, I will do so. When you are all gone from here, I have decided on becoming a sister of mercy."

Wedding and wedding presents were forgotten in a moment, as Rose flung herself on her knees, with her arms round her friend, beseeching her, with tears, not to do anything of that kind.

"All is decided, darling," said Eveline, caressing the girl's dark braids; "I have written to the lady superior, and am more anxious to join her than to go into the world again."

"Does papa know?" asked the weeping girl, awed by the grave tones in which the other spoke.

“Not yet ; I thought that I would not tell him till after your marriage ; he has enough to think of just now without my giving him more trouble. But come, dry your tears, my child, or they will say that I have been scolding you, and that will never do. I shall not say good-bye, for you and Percy will come and see me before you start to-morrow.”

“Will nothing induce you to come to us ?” asked Mrs. Maitland, as she enveloped Eveline in wraps, to guard her against the sharp, cold night-air.

“I should be a sorry guest at a marriage feast, dear friend,” replied Eveline, “but I shall come and see you the next day. May heaven’s best blessings rest on your child. Good-night. Who is going to take me home ?”

“Everybody !” cried the boys, rushing after her. “Our jolly walks home with you will come to an end now,” said they. “I’m awfully sorry, though to be sure you will live in the Palace with us, and that will be almost as jolly. I say, don’t it sound grand ? The Palace ! It feels like being princes.”

“I shouldn’t care to be a prince to be smothered,” said Georgie, the youngest.

“I say, cut along, youngster, and get the door opened, here’s Mrs. Greville coughing ;”

this by the eldest. "Let's all come in and have a cosy talk."

"Yes, let's!" was immediately seconded by the two others.

Even Dr. Maitland did not guess the tender conscience that made her shrink from being present at the wedding of his pure, innocent daughter—that made her feel that her presence there would be a blot where all else was fair; but one and all missed her and remembered her with a tender, reverent feeling, amidst all their happiness, and the last face that the young married couple saw on leaving the old place was hers, and hers was the last kiss that Rose received as she started on her wedding trip.

Dr. Maitland was sitting with her the next day—she had told him of her decision about her future life. He tried to dissuade her, for he knew that her health was too frail for the arduous exertions that she was about to undertake.

"We had all of us, too, fondly hoped that you would have come with us, and have been to us as another daughter in our home, as you will ever be in our hearts."

"Too kind," murmured Eveline, "but I could not do so. Shame and disgrace might

find me out and bring blame on you ; and your wife and children would shrink from me—from the wretched woman who was utterly unworthy to live in their presence, unworthy of all your kindness. No ; believe me, it is better thus.” She spoke with the sad and patient resignation of one who has given up all earthly hopes.

“ In higher Eyes we are all unworthy,” replied Dr. Maitland ; “ and if it comes to a question of human affairs, the debt is all on our side. What do we *not* owe you ? You have been a perfect blessing in this parish—to you Percy owes his promotion and his wife—Rose, her dowry—and I, this bishopric—see what you bring on yourself when you talk of *our* kindness,” he added, as Eveline endeavoured to stop him. “ But have you well considered this step you contemplate ?—the hardships, for which you are ill-fitted ? And yet I would not seek to deter you from so noble a life, were your strength equal to it, and did I see you entering on it with a bright cheerful spirit ; but delicate and fragile as you are, and seeing that you are taking this course more in the spirit of a penance than aught else, I do beseech you to pause. Our best years ought not to be given as a self-pun-

ishment, but in cheerfulness, and out of love to God. Have you well considered whether by doing your duty in the world, in a happy home circle, you might not be offering a truer gift than the one you propose?"

"I have indeed considered," said Eveline, very humbly, "and I have come to no hasty conclusion. I have not a single tie that binds me to the world : new ones I *could* not form. You say that I am not bright and cheerful. You say truly ; and yet I should be less so, had I to face the world again. I should live in constant dread of exposure, and feel like a hunted animal seeing danger in every shadow. No ! I dare not face it again. Do not suppose that in devoting my remaining days to the poor, that I regard it in the light of a gift—oh, no : but in daily, hourly working for Him, I may so purify my heart as to be able to offer it, in all humility, but with some hope of its acceptance. It is not as though I had never doubted, nor read, nor thought ; but I have ; and, struggle and strive as I may, awful doubts still arise, like black curtains, betwixt me and the pure, holy light. I have not said much of late, for argument only brings fresh doubts. Work I *must* have. That and prayer are my best remedies. I am not insensible to

your affection and kindness—oh, no ! believe me, I am not ; and do not think me ungrateful for refusing your kindest offer and following my own bent in this matter.”

“ My poor child ! ” said Dr. Maitland, his eyes filling as he looked at the beautiful, unhappy woman, so young in years—so old in suffering—so crushed and broken. The clergyman was lost in the man when he thought of the author of her misery, and he was glad that he had no clue to his name, for he felt that it would go hard with his Christian charity if he were ever to meet him face to face. A soul had been put in peril, and a life ruined, blighted, almost in the bud. Dr. Maitland rose and walked across the room, that his face might not betray emotions more becoming the soldier than the priest. Though Eveline had taken the whole blame on herself, he read her character too truly not to form a very accurate estimate of the wretched story ; besides, like all true, generous men, he felt that the man should save the woman, and not hunt her to the death, as he felt certain had been the case with the penitent woman before him. Was man to know the right and not do it ? Was he made strong to crush the feeble woman ?

“Was she thy God, that *her* thou didst obey
Before His voice? or was she made thy guide,
Superior, or but equal, that to her
Thou didst resign thy manhood?”

The words of the blind poet came into his mind as he turned once more to the sorrow-stricken woman, and with higher aid than his own sought to comfort and strengthen her trembling spirit.

Her determination not to accompany her friends to their new home cast a deep gloom over the little party at the rectory. She had so wound herself round the hearts of every one of them, that not all their bright prospects could dispel the sorrow they felt at parting with her.

It was the day after this conversation that Georgie, her young lover of the mature age of nine, came into her little sitting-room, looking very unhappy.

“Why, Georgie, what’s the matter?” said Eveline, drawing the child to her. It was a rare thing to see his bright face overclouded.

Georgie tried to keep back his tears, and he struggled manfully to be brave, but it was hopeless—the sorrow of his little heart broke forth.

"They say—you are—going—to be a nun," he sobbed out.

"You must not cry, my man," said Eveline, caressing him, and parting the curls that clustered over his forehead.

"Don't be a nun! I intend to marry you when I grow up. I will indeed, if you will only wait for me, and then no one shall make you a nun—I would kill them if they did!" And the child's eyes flashed again.

"Why, my boy, I shall be an old woman then."

"No you won't, you will always be young and beautiful," said Georgie, resolutely, "and I shall be ten in seven months, and I will marry you when I am eighteen."

"Eighteen is rather young, Georgie," remonstrated Eveline, kissing the eager, loving little face that was turned so earnestly to hers.

"Well, then, I'll wait till I am twenty—that's awfully old. Do wait for me, darling, and don't go and be a nun," and the child threw his arms round her neck.

"I tell you what we will do, my boy: we will go and ask your father and mother if they will let you come to Wales with me to take care of me."

"All by myself?" was the eager question.

“ All by yourself.”

“ That *will* be jolly ! Hurrah ! and now I *know* you will wait for me, you are such a pet !”

A feeling of great responsibility already weighed upon him as he conducted her to the rectory, where leave was readily granted, and the next day they set out on their journey.

She had a great deal to do down at Llanfenydd. She had had an opportunity of letting it, but the thought of strangers occupying this loved and hallowed place was so painful that she refused it ; but as she was leaving it for ever, there was much to settle.

With the exception of some remembrances to the friends who would prize them, all her jewels, laces, and other valuables were to be sold for the good of the poor. Her small, but valuable library was packed to be sent to the Palace, a present to Dr. Maitland, for she knew that he would value it as much for its own as for her sake ; other treasures were packed and directed to their various destinations, and the remainder was entrusted to her lawyer for sale. Although these preparations were very sad and painful, she went through them all in the same calm, gentle spirit that ruled her life now, till they were over, but when the house

was stripped of all save the furniture, and crowded with packing-cases, her fortitude gave way, and she wept long and bitterly. Everything that makes life beautiful was gone from her ; and who can sit down on the grave of life's happiness, and bid farewell to all earthly joys, and take up a life of hard self-denial—not in a bright, cheerful spirit, as Dr. Maitland had said, but as a heavy penance for heavy sins—and feel no pang ?

“ Better the narrow brain, the stony heart,
The staring eyes glazed o'er, with sapless gaze,
The long mechanic pacings to and fro,”—

than such an apathy.

But she never wavered in her resolution, and once more bravely taking up her cross, she made her final arrangements for the care of the house and for keeping in order certain graves in the little churchyard. Her last visit was to those graves—her last tears shed on the turf beneath which her mother slept. The night, though cold, was very still ; the moon was at her full, and shone with exceeding brightness, silvering the old gray tower of the holy edifice and the young evergreen-trees that marked the three head-stones that stood side by side in the clear, pale moonlight.

“Not for long, mother—not for long. Thy child will soon sleep by thy side,” she murmured as she knelt in a last farewell of a spot she was never again to see in life ; but her tears were dried now, and a calm, holy peace had come over her as she turned and left the churchyard that was sleeping in deep tranquillity. Once more, ere passing through the Lych-gate, over which drooped a large yew-tree—a dark and solemn sentinel at the entrance of the holy place—she paused to gaze on the calm and tranquillising scene. Peace—peace everywhere—around, above, beneath, and *within*. And thus did Eveline Greville leave her childhood’s home.

CHAPTER XXII.

“Farewell ! a word that must be and hath been—

A sound which makes us linger :—yet—farewell !”

CHILDE HAROLD.

THE last evening at the rectory had come, and for the last time Eveline sat with the Maitlands in their old home—the home of thirty years to one, and endeared to both by all the ties and associations of five and twenty years of a peaceful, unclouded wedded life. Quiet, monotonous, full of privations as that life had been, they could not quit it even for the bright prospects that awaited them, without many a pang ; and not the least one was in the knowledge that when the farewell they still paused to utter would be said, Eveline, whom they loved very dearly, would pass from them for ever.

The Bishop of M. had already seen the lady superior of the Home that Eveline had

selected, and all was ready for her reception on the morrow.

They sat in silence, their hearts too full to speak, though the one subject was uppermost in the minds of all. Edith clung weeping to Mrs. Greville, who was the only calm one of the party. Edith loved her with the reverent tenderness that a young girl who has never known a care, is apt to feel for one whom she sees is consumed by a silent sorrow—"that voiceless thought" which utters no complaint, "breathes no sigh, sheds no tear, but which consumes the heart." She had so hoped that Mrs. Greville would have accompanied them to their new home, and, fostered by their love, been weaned from that terrible grief for the loss of her husband—that husband whose name she never uttered. What other grief could that innocent girl imagine? Her guiltless heart dreamt not of what it knew not, and little she recked that there are some griefs

"Which none can mitigate,
Woes spurning participation,
Woes, woes, deep, untold, weeping woes,
For which there is no balm in Gilead,"

but she wept to think that she would never see her friend again; wept to think of the

laborious life that she, so unfitted for it, was about to enter on.

It was Edith's first sorrow—the first cloud in her hitherto untroubled life.

Kind, gentle, guileless Mrs. Maitland shared her daughter's belief as to Mrs. Greville's sorrow, although her greater experience made her regard with far more anxious eyes, the wasted form, the lustrous eye, the sunken cheek too often bright with a hectic spot. She knew that she was not long for this world, and she longed to take her home and tend her with a mother's love and care, and her heart ached with the worst pain it had ever known, at the thought of one who had become almost as dear to her as another daughter, going from them—not to a happy home where she would be loved and cared for and cherished—not to happiness—but to bestow upon others that of which she stood in such sore need herself.

Eveline caught the yearning eyes that rested on her, and pressing Mrs. Maitland's hand, answered the look.

“From my heart I thank you,” she said, and then, presently, “You have always been so good to me, may I ask for one more kindness at

your hands?—though this time it is not for myself.”

“My child,” said Mrs. Maitland, “you have never yet asked for a kindness that I know of—you only bestow them. What is it? It is granted beforehand.”

“It is to ask you to be kind to Captain Lovell, and to ask him sometimes to the Palace. The more you know of him the more you will like him, he is a true and loyal gentleman; and, Edith, will you, for my sake, be kind to him?”

She spoke so like one dying that both ladies began to sob, and the bishop hastily left the room. She alone was calm with the calmness of those who, on the brink of another world, wonder to see the tears of the weeping friends around. She it was who comforted them—who spoke of peace and happiness—who bade them be of good cheer—and who brought back the smiles to their tearful faces.

Presently she placed a little packet in Edith's hand, saying that she was rather early in the field in giving her a wedding present, but she must take it as such in anticipation; and then the bishop was brought back to look at the *parure* of pearls; and then

they all tried to look brighter, although they all knew it was but "lip service"—a loving deception to hide their feelings. And then Eveline took the diamond ring from her wedding finger, saying with a deep sigh, "My husband put it there thirteen years ago."

She tried to put it on Mrs. Maitland's finger, but alas! it would not go even half way down.

"You must wear it on your little finger till you can get it altered," said Eveline.

"What a wee hand it is!" said Mrs. Maitland, taking Eveline's hand and stroking it, "scarce larger than a child's." "And ill-fitted," she thought, "for the work it will have to do."

"Edith, dear, you must yet do me one more service. You must cut off my hair for me," said Eveline.

"It would only be a useless trouble where I am going," she said, in answer to their dismayed looks, "besides which, I believe it must come off."

Neither grief nor failing health had touched its luxuriance, and as she unloosened the plaits in which for the last few days she had worn it to put it out of the way of her packing, it fell in a golden cloud to the ground.

Freed from its confinement, it quivered and trembled like a living thing, and separating itself into strands, twined up in its own natural curls.

"I cannot do it," said Edith, holding the beautiful hair caressingly ; "it is a perfect sin to cut it off. Did you ever see such hair, papa?"

Her father looked at it with the surprise men always evince on seeing very long hair. He did think it a very great sacrifice, but he said nothing, and turned to his book. His wife had remarked that he had not once turned the page during the evening, and she knew why his glasses were so often misty.

"If *you* will not cut it off, *I* must," said Eveline.

"And probably throw it on the fire," cried Edith ; "at all events we can save it from that fate, and keep it as the dearest legacy you could give us ; and if it *must* be—are you *quite* sure?"

"Quite sure—cut fearlessly."

One by one did Edith sever the lovely curls, laying each one full length on the table, saying, as she tearfully fulfilled her cruel task, that she felt like a thief—an executioner.

Her father watched his daughter's fingers

with a sort of fascination as they went to and from head to table, while her mother turned away, saying that she could not bear to see it done.

"I had no idea my hair was so heavy," said Eveline, as the last curl was laid beside the others, "it is a great weight off my head."

"I should think it was," said the Bishop, getting up to look at the mass of curls that lay on the table, shining in the lamplight like a sheet of gold.

"You will catch your death, my dear," said Mrs. Maitland, looking sadly at the shorn head.

"If Captain Lovell could only know what I have been doing," said Edith, "I don't believe that he would ever speak to me again; but how young you look! Mamma, let us have a glass case made and a green velvet cushion, and keep these golden curls just as they are."

Thus was accomplished the sacrifice of as beautiful a head of hair as ever graced our first mother in the garden of Eden, or the lady who a thousand summers back, "shook her rippled ringlets to her knee," and rode through the town of many spires to redeem her lord's people from the tax.

“Will you be ready to-morrow at ten, dear child?” asked Dr. Maitland, as he left her at her door that night.

Her heart was very full as she answered in the affirmative. It was the last good-night between her and the kind, good friend who had been as a father to her, and she could not keep back her tears.

He hastily left her, scarcely less moved than herself, and Eveline turned into her house.

She sat up far into the small hours writing letters. One to Frank Lovell, but not knowing his address she directed it to his club, where it remained many weeks ere he received it.

She wrote at great length to Pamela, speaking in touching terms of her gratitude for all her affection and kindnesses, “not one of which that I do not remember, or that I shall ever forget. I have not told you of this step that I take to-morrow, until now, for many reasons, and do not think me unkind for telling no one where I am going. It is better for me to cut every link that binds me to the past, and to be as one dead to all who ever knew me; and if you should hear me hardly judged, think gently of me, as of one

who has already gone to atone for all sins. A box will reach you almost as soon as this letter, containing a few trifles which you used to admire. Will you accept them for my sake as a remembrance from one who loves you very dearly? I have also put in the box that old point de Venise that you said was worth a 'queen's ransom' on the sad night when poor little Helen was burnt, and which you would not let me wear. Do you remember? It is strange how every trifle comes before me to-night as they are said to come before people in the few minutes before drowning. Will you wear the lace for my sake? My husband gave it me years ago in Italy."

The letter went on recalling their first meeting in Rome and many little incidents of their friendship—she spoke with much affection of all Pamela's people, asking to be remembered to them, and mentioned Lord Lorton at greater length, and also Captain Lovell, whom she hoped would some day marry Edith Maitland, the sweetest girl she ever knew.

Pamela, who rarely wept, shed many tears over that letter—over the sad end of the beautiful, the ill-fated Eveline Greville.

She gave the letter to her brother to read.

"Do people ever come out of these convents?" he asked.

"I really don't know. I know nothing about these things. I had felt so sure that she would have lived with the Maitlands. You see she says that they urged it. She would have married and all ill-nature would have been put a stop to."

Lord Lorton turned almost savagely on his sister.

"I don't care a —— what the world says. She may have loved Vandeleur—I think that she did—but she never deserved what a parcel of evil-tongued Jezebels set afloat."

"Dearest Lorton," said his sister, "I think she is the best woman I know, and if *she* does not go to heaven I do not know who will; but she will not leave her convent because—she is—dying. See here, dear, I have a letter from Miss Maitland sending me one of poor Eveline's long curls. Did you ever see anything like the beauty and length of it? see what she says of her." Pamela put the letter and the curl in his hand and left him. She never saw either the curl or Eveline's letter again, and she never asked for them.

"Father—for so you have been to me—

once more give me your blessing, and tell me, oh, tell me if you truly think that I shall be pardoned."

She was standing alone with the Bishop of M. in the parlour of the Home whither he had conveyed her. Although she was deadly pale and greatly exhausted by the long journey to London, the old, wistful yearning was in the anxious eyes upturned to his.

"What is the one exhortation—the one blessed promise throughout the holy Gospel?" said the Bishop, laying his hands on her head as she knelt to receive his blessing. "'Repent, love Me, and ye shall not taste of death.' In the name of Him Who taught that blessed doctrine—Who came on earth and was crucified to save us—I absolve thee, my child."

He invoked a solemn blessing on her and left her kneeling in thoughts too deep and holy for any human words to disturb.

CHAPTER XXIII.

*“ Por. The quality of mercy is not strain’d ;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath : it is twice blessed ;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.”*
MERCHANT OF VENICE.

THE place was London—the locality St. Giles—the scene one of those courts at the end of an alley that are a disgrace to civilization and Christianity.

A sister of mercy was fearlessly walking down among a set of beings that might well have made the stoutest heart quail, but no such fears assailed Sister Teresa.

She stopped here and there to say a word to a child, whose old, white, sin-hardened face gave the lie to its years—she nodded kindly to creatures out of whom the last trace of womanhood was stamped by poverty, filth, and vice ; yet the sight of her sweet, loving

face would for a second bring something human into theirs. The men—bloodthirsty, brutal, ferocious as they were—offered no insult to the gentle sister who came as a friend ; and many a coarse, obscene jest was arrested on their lips till she was out of hearing.

It was the unconscious homage paid to love and charity.

Bravely she went on, and entered the tenement which she sought—a place reeking with vice, crime, pestilence, and humanity. A staircase, or rather the remains of one, for many a step was smashed in—on which a few broken stumps showed that once there had been a hand-rail, led to the various landings whereon the lodgers dwelt.

On one of these landings, leaning over the lower half of a dilapidated door, which, as far as it could, shut one family into what was home to them, stood a man, gaunt with hunger—with a wolfish-looking face—naked to the waist—a fierce, ferocious being—very little raised above the wild beasts of the desert—tame if fed, but rendered nearly desperate by the pangs of hunger.

The Sister paused to speak with him, and asked leave to come in and see his boy on her

way down. The fierceness died out of him as the angelic face smiled upon him sweetly, and courteously asking a favour, not conferring one.

He gave a gruff, surly answer, that "she might if she'd a mind on't." Thanking him, she went toiling up the steep and broken stairs—often pausing to regain her breath, which came painfully—till she reached the garret, of which she was in search.

A room with a roof sloping from an angle of six feet to the floor, and with a small window partially stuffed with rags, and which let in a glimmer of light, showing the misery that dwelt there. That was the room which the Sister sought, and which was occupied by a woman and four children. The woman was lying on some straw in one corner; she was in the last stage of consumption, and on her withered arm was an infant, seeking in vain for nature's nourishment. Close by stood a child, scarce three years old by its size, but doubtless numbering eight or nine years more, whose large head and idiotic stare told its miserable tale. On the floor—for except the straw in the corner, the room was utterly bare—sat an old, wizened-faced girl, of about twelve, with an infant in her arms, whom she

was feeding with cold water out of a broken cup, with the remnant of a spoon.

Hunger—fierce, untamable hunger—was hand in hand with childhood and death.

The Sister took food and milk from her wallet, and gave it to the children, and then kneeling down by the dying woman tried to make her take some nourishment. But the woman fiercely pushed aside the jelly that was offered her, saying—

“Wot’s the good o’ that to me? I told yer so last time. Give me gin, I say—gin!—summut to drown the burning pain I feel here. Wot’s the good o’ that rubbishing stuff? Gin’s the thing—there’s life in gin,” and the woman, her voice sinking to an incoherent mutter, fell back exhausted.

The Sister poured some wine down her throat, which revived her.

“’Tain’t so bad, but ’tain’t like gin,” said the woman, faintly.

The passion, strong in death, could not be shaken off. She listened in sullen silence to the words of comfort that Sister Teresa spoke, then muttered that “she need go to heaven, she’d had her turn of hell here already.” It would be too awful to repeat the wretched woman’s words, but when the Sister asked her

leave to take her children to a home where they would be cared for, she sullenly answered that "them as took 'em might keep 'em, they'd never been much good to her. Husband?" and she gave a mocking laugh. No, she hadn't ne'er a husband, and the fathers on 'em won't much care wot becomes on 'em, she dared say. "Take 'em; and if so be yer won't give me gin, wot's the good of your stopping here? Oh! this pain! Drat the squalling brute!"

The Sister gently saved the infant from the blow that was aimed at it. She fed it with milk, and softly singing to it, she hushed it to sleep.

"I could sing once, and if I could get a good drink of gin I'd sing again;" here a sharp fit of coughing stopped her. A blood-vessel burst, and amidst terrors, imprecations, entreaties, the woman died.

Too painful a scene to be dwelt on. The Sister sent the girl to the next neighbour for aid, and presently, with an infant in her arms, followed by the girl carrying the other, and leading the idiot by the hand, she descended the staircase.

Pausing again where the gaunt man with the wolfish face was still standing, she told

him of what had happened, and asked him to let her bring the children in for a little while. He opened the remnant of a door. She gave into his hands the wallet in which was the remainder of the food she had brought, and went up to a woman, who, crouched on the floor, was rocking herself to and fro beside a tattered mattress, on which lay a boy dying of fever. The Sister laid her hand kindly on the woman's shoulder, and putting a cup of milk in her hand, she begged her to give it to the sick child.

The boy's eyes lighted up as they fell on Sister Teresa, and he held out his thin burning hand.

"You've come again. I'm glad. I suppose it wor a dream, but I thought I seed you all in white with wings, a-flying up, and I thought as how yer'd forgot me."

The Sister assured the boy that she had not forgotten him, and she spoke many loving words to him, telling him of the beautiful country that he was going to see.

"Are you a-coming?" asked he.

"I hope so, very soon," said the Sister, on her knees by his side, and holding the parched hand in hers, she sang him to sleep.

The mother was softened, and listened to

one who sought so tenderly to comfort her dying boy. The wolfish-looking man came and bent over his sleeping child, and gruffly uttered that "He wor a good boy ever, he wor," and turned away as he brushed the mist from his eyes. The Sister spoke to him with a kindly tact all her own, and promising to come again ere long, she gathered her children together and descended the stairs with them.

She paused in the court to tell them of what had happened, and asked them if they minded her taking these poor orphans with her. Sister Teresa spoke with an urbanity that won her way to every heart.

I need hardly say that Sister Teresa and Eveline Greville were one.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ Black was her garb, her rigid rule
Reform'd on Benedictine school ;
Her cheek was pale, her form was spare,
Vigils and penitence austere
Had early quenched the light of youth.”

MARMION.

EIGHTEEN months had passed since Eveline Greville had taken her place among the sisters of——Home, under her mother's name of Teresa. Fragile and delicate as she was, she was still not only living but working with a zeal that not another of the sisterhood, indefatigable as they all were, could equal. Early and late——often out all night——in fever-ridden courts——in noisome dens——among misery, vice, and wretchedness of all description——she toiled with a patience and cheerfulness that never failed. She seemed to bear a charmed life, no harm ever touched her——no peril ever came near her——she entered dens of poverty and its too common attendants, vice and crime——such

dens as I suppose exist nowhere but in our own metropolis—with a fearlessness to which the other sisters frankly confessed they could not attain; and *they* went where no man would venture singly and unarmed; but Sister Teresa felt no fear. Not the coarsest ruffian, man nor woman, ever molested the gentle Sister whose sweet face no less than whose garb proclaimed her errand of mercy.

More than one child did she rescue from the haunts of infamy, and if unclaimed, it was draughted into one of the schools belonging to the Home, to be brought up a responsible and respectable member of society: and more than one wretched thing in rags and loathsomeness, or what was no less painful, in tawdry finery, was brought by her to another house, also belonging to the Home, and where, at her solicitation, the experiment was tried of separating the women, and at once giving them, ere their too often momentary remorse had time to die out, the entire charge of two or more children, hoping that the occupation, the wholesome outlet for their affections (without which few women are safe), the responsibility, and the sacred trust reposed in them, would keep alive the feelings that had been awakened.

The results proved how well Sister Teresa had gauged woman's nature. Such opportunities of marriage as were possible, were afforded these late outcasts; and the Home had the satisfaction of sending more than one, a happy emigrant, with her husband, to Canada; and it speaks well for human nature that some of them asked to take with them the children who had been entrusted to their care, and to whom they had become much endeared.

The Home was prospering, but, alas! Sister Teresa was failing fast. Long fainting fits often followed any fatigue, but recovering from them, she renewed her laborious life of love and charity, with the same energy as before, helping, consoling, and striving to save wherever she went.

A gentleman was walking very late one night in the neighbourhood of Westminster, deep in thought, when some one touched him, and a woman's voice, weak and plaintive, murmured a few inarticulate words. Without looking round, he shook off the hand somewhat roughly, and was passing on, but the action, slight as it had really been, was sufficient to make the woman stagger back against the wall, and a book that she held in her

hand, dropped on the pavement at his feet. The light from the opposite lamp fell on an ivory cross in bas-relief on the dark morocco binding. Raising his eyebrows in surprise at such a book being (as he thought) in such hands, he picked it up to restore it to the owner, whom he then saw was not what he had supposed, but a sister of mercy.

He could not see her face for it was bent down and concealed by the large black hood of her order, but ashamed of his mistake and of his churlishness, he apologised, and asked if he could be of any service to her.

But even as he spoke an unwonted agitation stole over him, making his heart tremble with hopes, thoughts, fears that were hardly definable.

Thin, attenuated, wasted—yet there was a grace in the whole attitude—in the way in which the small, ungloved hands hung clasped before her, that reminded him of *one* woman—the one woman in the world to him even now—the woman who had rebuked him, and whom he had never ceased to love.

“A cab if you would be so good,” was feebly uttered. The voice was hollow, as unlike the silvery tones that had so bewitched him and others, as might be; but there was

no mistaking the dear face, as raising her head with a painful effort, the gaslight fell on it. Shrunk, deadly-white, great, large beautiful eyes, set in dark caverns, hollowed out by grief, by fasting, by vigils, by illness—still it was Eveline—*his* Eveline, *it might be*, for he was even then in mourning for his wife.

“Eveline! Mrs. Greville!” he gasped, and in a moment his arm was round her as he saw her quietly sliding to the ground.

Not much longer, poor weary traveller!—a little while only, and the burden you have carried patiently and nobly, shall be laid down, and the promised reward will be earned. It is close at hand.

A policeman came up and went for a cab, into which the gentleman lifted her, light as a child. She was not fainting—*she was dying*: but she could yet speak, and could give the address of the Home, to which they rapidly drove, she lying resistless, helpless in his arms.

How often had he thought—dreamt of this! but not thus!—not thus! Had he found her only to see her die—he who would give his life for her? Heavier and heavier she drooped in his arms, and the cab seemed to crawl—

God ! would they never reach their destination ?

“ A sovereign, if you will put your horse to a gallop ! ” cried he, letting down the front window.

The horse was going at his best speed, and the man said—

“ I don't want nort for helping she. I knows her, and bless her, and it's I as says it.”

I was sitting in the parlour of the Home, anxiously awaiting the return of Sister Teresa. Midnight had chimed forth from all the churches in the quarter. Six hours since she had gone forth on her errand of mercy ! In any other case I should have thought this of no moment, but she was so frail, that this prolonged fatigue and fasting filled me with fears that I dreaded even to acknowledge to myself. No harm had ever yet come near her—why should it now ? I asked myself ; yet, filled with vague alarm, I went forth and looked up and down our quiet street. A dark, sultry night. I shuddered to think of the fever-reeking atmosphere that doubtless she was breathing. Not a sign of her for whom I was watching. I returned to my room, and strove to occupy myself with making various

appliances for the hospital. One o'clock—two o'clock. What was that? the sound of wheels? I ran to the door as a cab drew up.

Too truly had my heart foreboded evil. Lying in a stranger's arms was the lifeless form of our beloved sister.

I asked no questions—what need of such with such a sight before me? In silence I assisted him to lift her out of the cab, and he bore her into the house.

“She is very ill. Lead the way,” said he, in the abrupt tone of a man labouring under great mental agitation. The tone told me that, though a stranger to me, he was none to her.

I led the way to her room, in which there was not a single luxury, though all was exquisitely clean and white. The only colour in the room was in a small recess facing the window, and there stood a table covered to the ground with a rich, crimson velvet altar-cloth. The sacred monogram in the centre was richly embroidered in gold, and a heavy gold fringe bordered the cloth. On this altar stood a massive silver crucifix with the holy effigy in gold (it had been her mother's), a few white flowers—her daily offering, and not unfrequently a gift from the poor—a Bible, and a book of devotions.

To this room I led the way, and the stranger laid the sister on her low pallet-bed, and kneeling down, he tenderly supported her head while I endeavoured to pour some restorative down her throat. My heart sank as I saw it run from her white lips. She gave no signs of life.

I knew when she went on this last errand that she was unfit for it—but not so unfit as this—and the case, which was in her hands was urgent—a direct appeal had been made to her, and I yielded to her entreaties. She went, and *thus* did she return!

“Where is the nearest doctor?” exclaimed the stranger, distracted, as every means failed to revive the patient.

I gave him the address of the one who attended us, more in the wish to give him active employment, than in any hope I had for her. I summoned another sister to my aid, and at last we succeeded in restoring consciousness; and seeing the sweet, patient smile that came with returning life to the sufferer’s lips, I could not help hoping, almost against hope, that we might still keep our loved one among us for a little while longer. And yet no one knew better than myself how fitted she was for the Home that was opening

for her—and how gladly she would obey the welcome summons thither, but—we were loath to part with her—she was very dear to us.

The doctor shortly came with the stranger who, in that hour of sorrow which had aroused all the inmates, followed almost as unperceived as he was unknown (indeed, except by myself, he was taken for a second medical man). He entered the chamber of death, and, with the doctor, stood by the bedside. The sister's eyes were open, and she evidently knew them both, for she smiled upon them, and I saw a ray light up the stranger's face, and I heard him say—

“Save her, doctor, and all that I have in the world shall be yours.”

The doctor looked at him with his quiet, searching gaze. What a contrast between the two faces! One calm and grave—the other eager, quivering with anxiety, and contracted with pain as he hung trembling on every look and word of the man of science.

“I generally save my patients when I can,” said this latter, with a slight touch of sarcasm in his voice which turned to the usual professional cheerful tone as he addressed his patient. He asked but few questions, and then desired me to show him to our medicine closet. The

stranger followed us. He had in the simplest manner made himself one of us, and the man was too wretched to be rebuked for what in his great misery could not be called an intrusion. I asked the question which I saw him vainly endeavouring to utter.

The doctor shook his head very gravely as he measured out some medicines.

"The vital powers are exhausted," he said. "It must have come to this before long, in any case; the only wonder is that it has not come till now, considering the work she did."

"Is there *no* hope?" groaned the stranger, with a voice of such agony that even our rough, but really kind-hearted, doctor was moved.

"None," he said, abruptly. "Give her this as often as you can, the oftener the better. I will look in the first thing. Now, sir, you had better come with me; I suppose you have no particular business here?"

For hours after, I heard a measured step on the pavement outside. The sound of this footfall, never passing the house, but often pausing beneath the window, and the recollection of the haggard gray face that seemed turned to stone on hearing the doctor's uncompromising verdict, so preyed upon me

while keeping watch in the death-chamber, that unable to bear it any longer I stole out of the room while my patient was sleeping and went to him and implored him to return home, for she was sleeping and was not worse ; and to my intense relief I saw him pass down the street, and I returned to my watch.

CHAPTER XXV.

“Ask not, hope not one relenting thought
From Him who doomed thee thus to waste away.”

THE MAREMMA.

“All was ended now; the hope and the fear and the sorrow,
All the aching of heart, the restless unsatisfied longing,
All the dull deep pain and constant anguish of patience.”

LONGFELLOW.

THE brief summer night—when the glowing tints in the west scarce fade away ere they are caught up and answered from the east—was gone, and the glorious sun had risen from his crimson bed, had thrown aside his golden curtains, and was high above the smoke-begrimed house-tops, giving light and life and hope to many a weary wayfarer. I was gazing out of the window at a scene, glorious even in the narrow street wherein we lived, thinking of the hundreds of fellow-creatures not far off, to whom, living in dark, dank,

noisome cellars, the gladsome rays of the god of day never penetrate. Living in obscurity, mental and bodily, who can wonder at the awful scenes there enacted? From one of the worst of these wretched dens, which represented home to its still more wretched inmates, had our sister passed her last night on earth, but not unrewarded even there. From the few broken sentences that she uttered from time to time I gathered that the wretched man, whom she had been tending for some days, had died while she was with him, but not hopeless, not in darkness—and if the sun that was now lending material glory to the world had not reached him, a far more celestial one—a ray of eternal glory—had shed its light upon the poor, benighted soul ere it left its mortal tenement, and I rejoiced to think that her last work had been thus blessed.

But was it her last work? Not quite, though I thought so then as I watched the fitful flame of the lamp of life still flickering, still hovering—fed with the last remains of mortal strength. It is a hackneyed simile, and trite enough, but who can watch a lamp burning out, without its recalling the last flutter of life as the vital spark flies upwards? The

feeble light waning as the oil consumes—the sudden darkness—the apparent end—the transient flame that, leaping out of darkness, startles the watcher by its sudden brilliancy, inclining him to the belief that the end is not so near after all, when the quick darkness once more kills hope—and then comes the great final effort, when every remaining drop of oil gathers round the wick—sends up one last brilliant light and sinks for ever into darkness, while the watcher in vain looks for another sign of the life that shall come no more.

All is over. And whither has sped the ethereal essence that gave light to the now useless vessel? Ay, *whither*? And is it not a type of our own dissolution? Does not the same query force itself on the mind when the human lamp is burning out the oil of life, to be re-illuminated in the realms of immortality?

But *whither* has fled the vital spark that gave warmth and beauty to the now rigid, clay-cold limbs that no earthly flame has power to move? *Whither*? That awful question which comes home to all; from the king upon his throne to the peasant in his hovel—from the scholar among his books to the unlettered clown amidst the fields—from

the lady glittering in her satins and jewels to the hard-worked sempstress who fashioned her garments—when death, the leveller, shall make all men equal, and shall take all—high and low, rich and poor—before the great tribunal from which there is no appeal. Oh, that we could all raise our eyes confidently to heaven and joyfully exclaim—

“There ! to live again in everlasting light.”

Verily if any one might faithfully say so, it was the dying sister whose faint voice recalled me from my reverie.

The last sparks of life were fast gathering around her feeble clay, lending her momentary strength for the closing act of her life—love and charity to the last ! In that supreme hour, woman’s sublime forgiveness shone forth.

“Mother, I am dying, or I would not ask it. May I see him ? Will you let me ?”

I ought to have said “No,” I suppose, and reminded her of what she knew as well I did—that she was dying, and that her thoughts should not be of earth ; but it needed a braver spirit than mine to rebuke one whose life ever since she had been with us, was an ensample to all for meek and humble piety, no less than for holy works. I hesitated for *her* sake.

“Mother,” she pleaded, “not for my sake, but for his, and yet not all for his,” and her large eyes, beautiful even in death, turned with glowing love and gratitude towards the crucifix that stood on the little altar she had made for herself, “for His sake. A word from me, dying, may make him think more seriously of this hour which is coming to us all and which few in his position pause to consider. He once rebuked me, but he will not rebuke me dying. Mother, the sin was mine, let me save him if I can.”

I alone was responsible—I was Superior of the Home—and I knew that she would bow to my decision, but an inner voice told me that were her request refused, her thoughts would be less calm than they should be to receive the last rites of the Church. And have not the dying, I thought, a prescience that we in health should not lightly disregard? I asked his name, for I had never heard it. All past names had been a sealed book when she made her sad confession to me—and it was a book that no one had a right to open—and save that I knew who she was—I had often seen her formerly on matters of charity—I knew no more.

She thanked me with a look of deep grati-

tude, and asked me to send the priest to her. The Bishop of M. was in London, and I had already sent an early summons to him, knowing what a mutual blessing it would be to meet on the threshold of eternity. He was at the door as I left her.

* * * *

It was barely nine o'clock, and I felt sure that my note would reach Mr. Vandeleur before he went out ; and in about an hour the messenger, whom I had sent in a cab, returned with a note.

It was in my hand unopened, when another missive came to me—a few lines, signed R. Challenor, begging me to send by the bearer news of Mrs. Greville. Thus did I know who was the stranger who had borne her home, dying, a few hours ago.

I gave it to the Bishop, who at that moment entered the parlour. He said that he would answer it, and I returned to the sick-room, where I found the sufferer asleep. Dismissing the sister who was watching, I opened Mr. Vandeleur's note with a feeling of sickly fear. My mind misgave an awful blow to her, and I almost wished that she might not wake again from the short slumber into which exhaustion had thrown her. I read the note :

“ Mr. Vandeleur presents his compliments to the Lady Superior of —— Home, and deeply regrets Mrs. Greville’s illness, which he trusts is less severe than is supposed. He does not see how an interview can be productive of any good on either side, and regrets that Mrs. Greville should desire it ; besides which, he has various engagements which will prevent his obeying her request, but he will call or send to-morrow, to hear how she is.”

And I had told him that her life might be counted by minutes !

What could I say to her ? How tell her of the heartless letter he had written ? While framing some excuse to make to her, I saw that her eyes were open, and fixed on the fatal letter.

“ What does he say, mother ?”

I hesitated.

“ Let me see it, mother,” and she held out her transparent hand, already cold with the coldness of death.

She said no word, but I pray that I may never see on mortal face the look of agony that came over hers, as she laid the letter down.

Her lips were moving, and her eyes turned to the holy emblem of our blessed faith.

There was a sound of rapid wheels down

the street, they grated against the kerb-stone. I heard the doors of a hansom flung back ; and thinking that Mr. Vandeleur had repented him of his unfeeling note, I myself went to the door. He stood on the step.

“ Am I in time ? ”

“ Yes, she still lives,” I replied.

“ Thank God ! ” he exclaimed, and throwing the driver a sovereign, he followed me into the house, and then slipped by me. Guided by the instinct of love, intuitively he seemed to know her room, and was on his knees by her bedside, when I entered.

“ My darling ! my Eveline ! at last ! at last ! I have so sought you, my darling ! You shall get well, my own !—ah, my own, you will be mine at last ! ”

Was this the writer of that measured, precise note ? Was his wife dead ? Was he free to claim her, albeit it was in death ? I was amazed and terror-struck at the consequences of having allowed this madman—for so he appeared to me—to come near her ; but she was too near heaven to be moved by aught earthly. The eternal gates were open—heavenly love was sending down angelic wings to waft the purified spirit to realms of everlasting joy—she had finished with mortality—finished with

all its cares and pains and hopes and fears. No earthly passions could excite her now.

A sunbeam poured into the room through the open window—bathed her in its glorious light—and streamed from her on to the golden crucifix, which it flooded with glory, and there remained, spreading from thence till the whole room was filled with splendour.

A seraphic smile broke over her face—her glorious eyes beamed with a light not of earth—she raised herself from her pillow, and lifting her folded hands towards the radiant heavens, she said, “Meet me there.”

He took the little hands into one of his, and seeing her waver, he passed his other arm round her, drew her to him, and laid her head upon his breast.

She neither moved nor spoke, and he bowed his head on hers in silence.

Respect for the sacred feelings before me, on which I was unwilling to intrude at such a moment—might not a soul be trembling in the balance?—I withdrew to the altar at the end of the room.

Not a sound in the hushed chamber. The strong man’s breathing was stilled. A deep, heavy silence—eloquent to those who have listened to it—pervaded the room. The sun-

beam departed through the window whence it had come. An awful, mysterious stillness—the stillness of death—crept through the air, thrilling the veins of the living.

I rose from my knees, and came forward.

“Hush,” he said, “she is sleeping.”

But I saw that she was dead. Probably she had died when he gathered her in his arms.

“She is indeed sleeping,” I said, “but she will not wake on earth again.”

I gently removed her from his arms, and laid her reverently on her pillow, and closed the eyes over which the film of death was spreading; but the same seraphic smile that had illumined her face in the supreme moment, still lingered on the infantile mouth, and it was hard to believe that life and those lips were parted for evermore. It was as the face of an angel sleeping. I crossed the tiny hands upon the marble breast.

“She is sleeping,” said he, hoarsely; “she is not”—but his voice refused to speak the word—“she is sleeping.”

It was more an agonised entreaty than an assertion.

“Dead on earth—dead to earthly sorrows,” I replied, solemnly, “but living in heaven. Her last prayers were for you.”

“My darling! my loved one! Were they? They shall not be lost?”

Impossible to describe the fervour—the intensity of feeling—in those words. He fell on his knees—his whole frame convulsed with heavy, gasping sobs. I turned away from the man’s agony, awed by its intensity.

Men, however, control themselves more quickly than we do. He soon rose to his feet, and looked long and earnestly at her, and then bent down to kiss the marble lips, but he started back from their icy touch and staggered—like a blind man groping his way—from the room.

As I recalled the scene—the shock to him—his agony—the fervour of his exclamation “*They shall not be lost*”—sounding like a vow recorded above—I felt that I had done wisely in obeying her last behest.

It went hard with me as I thought of his noble, generous countenance, to believe him guilty, as I knew him to be—hard to believe that the good, manly, resolute face that I had just seen belonged to one who could harm a woman—desert her, careless of what became of her—and again, for his own amusement, seek her. One moment to write a heartless note—the next to rush into her presence over-

whelmed with love and sorrow. Verily there are mysteries in human nature that none can fathom.

In the course of the day Mr. Challenor called, and asked to see me ; the Bishop's note had prepared him, and yet when I told him that all was over, the worn and somewhat stern face grew more gray and more worn. He asked no questions, but turned away in silence from the house of death.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“Life and these lips have long been separated,
Death lies like an untimely frost
Upon the sweetest flower of all the field.”

ROMEO AND JULIET.

EARLY on the following afternoon one of the sisters came to me and asked me to go down to a lady who was in the parlour.

“She called to see Mrs. Greville,” said the sister, “but I told her that no such person was here, and then she said perhaps we called her Eveline. I assured her that no one of that name was in the Sisterhood, and thinking that she means some one in the Refuge, I begged her to wait while I came to you.”

I went down. A lady was standing by the window. She turned as I entered. Although not actually handsome, I have rarely seen as noble, truthful, generous a countenance as that which met my eyes, as, coming forward, she said—

"I am Lady Gaveston. I received a telegram this morning which has greatly distressed me, telling me of the illness of a very dear friend who has long been lost to me. Owing to my absence from home there has been a delay in receiving it. I started by the first train for this address"—here she referred to the paper in her hand—"but I fear that there must be some mistake, for on my asking for Mrs. Greville, a nun—a lady——"

"A sister," I interposed, seeing her difficulty.

"Told me that no such person as Mrs. Greville lived here. Is not this —— Home?"

"It is ; but surnames are always dropped here ; and, except myself, no one knew that Eveline Greville and Sister Teresa were one."

"*Were* one?"

"Even so, Lady Gaveston. Our dear sister left us yesterday for the Home that she was so well fitted to enter."

"Dead ! Too late !" exclaimed Lady Gaveston, sinking on to a chair and covering her face.

I let her weep her first tears, and then strove to comfort her. She eagerly listened to everything that I could tell her about her friend, whom she evidently had dearly loved,

and when she was calmer, I took her to the chamber where the dead sister lay, hoping that the sweet, happy look on the marble face would do more towards comforting her than any words of mine. I had not seen her again myself, and I was painfully startled to see the change that had come over the features in a few hours. It often does so happen, but I had not thought of it.

The look of heaven-born peace and happiness that had lighted up her face as her spirit winged its way from earth, had given place to one of hopeless agony—of broken-hearted sorrow.

The marble face in the majesty of death revealed what the heart must have suffered in life.

How great that suffering must have been was told only too well by the agonised look imprinted in indelible characters on the dead, set face lying on the pillow—never more to smile—nothing now could change the anguish written there.

God rest her soul.

Though I had witnessed her glorious change to immortality—though I knew that her spirit was with her Saviour, I drew back

appalled at the awful change that met my sight.

“Broken-hearted! My poor Eveline!” cried Lady Gaveston, bowing her head in her hands.

Broken-hearted indeed—bruised, wounded to the death by a man, but raised to everlasting bliss by the Eternal—standing before the Lamb with all her tears wiped away.

So I whispered to the weeping friend who was kneeling at the foot of the bed.

A sister here knocked at the door and gave me a card—Mr. Vandeleur’s—saying that he was waiting to see me.

Surprised that he had returned to a spot so fraught with woe to him, I supposed that he had a communication of some importance to make. I went to him, but I confess that the vision of the dead face—the misery on which haunted me, a misery which had been caused by him—made me enter the room where he was with very different feelings to those which his agony of grief yesterday had evoked. But it was another man who stood there. Much older, and though somewhat like, he lacked the noble high-souled countenance of the younger one. The face before me was that of a selfish, vain, irritable man, while the

full underlip, and the chin rounded into almost feminine beauty, betrayed a weak and voluptuous nature.

Was *this* the man for whom Sister Teresa had broken her heart and died?

Verily the human heart is a mystery. I was glad to think, even in that moment, that the possessor of the fine, generous countenance had not belied nature's mirror—that it was not he who had brought such dire sorrow on the fairest blossom of earth.

Though this takes long to tell, it flashed through my mind in an instant—before the closing of the door had left us alone together.

The ruin he had wrought—the heartless letter he had written—were before me, and all my woman's nature revolted at him.

“You are somewhat late, Mr. Vandeleur. Our sister died five minutes after reading your note. It was truly a kindly answer to a dying woman's request.”

“Dead?” said he, starting.

“She was at death's door when I sent to you. I told you so. She lived one hour longer.”

He began making some excuse, saying something about ladies' feelings carrying them away.

I looked at him with a contempt I could

not repress, and thinking that the sight of the face in its unutterable anguish might be a salutary lesson, I said—

“Lady Gaveston is here. Will you follow me?”

I do not suppose that he knew where I was taking him, for on entering the room where his victim lay, he started back with a look of horror, and turned to leave it, only that I was standing by the door and he could not easily pass me.

On hearing us enter, Lady Gaveston rose from her knees, and perceiving who was with me, she wiped her eyes. The soft, gentle expression of her face turned in an instant to one of indignant surprise.

“*You* here? Have you come to see your handiwork? Ay, look at her! Broken-hearted—dead—killed—murdered by you, as surely as though you had plunged a dagger in her heart! But for *you* she would be alive now—a happy, an honoured wife—a blessing to all who knew her. Were not your sins heavy enough that you added *this* one to the catalogue? Look at that face that you knew in all its beauty and happiness—look at the anguish—the suffering written thereon *now*; and ask yourself *who* put that seal upon it,

and *who* will have to answer for it at the great tribunal where she now stands? Her blood is on your head, and so surely as there is a God in heaven, so surely will that blood be required at your hands!"

She looked magnificent in her wrath, as with her splendid form upreared to its height, she stood between him and the dead, preventing any nearer approach on his part to his victim who lay there cold and lifeless. Her head with its coronet of dark plaits was thrown back—her eyes flashed fire, and confronting him stedfastly, with one hand extended, she stood like a denunciatory prophetess.

I stood spell-bound, helpless to stop the torrent of words that poured forth, till the momentary silence recalled my power of thought and action.

"Not in *her* presence, Lady Gaveston," I said, laying my hand on her arm.

"Thank you. You are right. Take him away, but let me see him again somewhere else."

Strange events were happening in our quiet Home. The silent, humble, unobtrusive sister, who shunned all observation during her life among us, had, in death, caused an unheard-of excitement beneath our roof.

I need hardly say that I disobeyed Lady Gaveston's impetuous desire of seeing Mr. Vandeleur again. Could reproach do any good? Was not such a desecration to the dead? Better bury in silence whatever could cast a stain on one whose life ever since she had been among us had been one of spotless purity. Her sins were between herself and her God, and even to hint at them were now a dishonour to her.

"I have disobeyed your injunction, Lady Gaveston," I said to her, when she joined me in my room; "I have sent Mr. Vandeleur away — if he has any human feeling, the sight of that face will be far more effectual than any sermon preached on earth. Besides, *she* is in heaven. What more can any of us desire?"

"You are right, you are quite right," said Lady Gaveston, sobbing.

She stayed a short time longer to ask whether her friend had expressed any wishes that she could fulfil. I told her that beyond that of being laid beside her mother at Llanfennydd, she had mentioned none other—that all her worldly affairs had been settled when she entered the Sisterhood, and that by a deed of gift she had then placed all her

worldly possessions in our hands in trust for the poor.

Lady Gaveston, promising that her husband, who was Mrs. Greville's nearest relative, would relieve me of all painful duties, and graciously expressing a hope that our acquaintance would not end here, took her leave.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Par. Sweet flower ! with flowers I strew thy bridal bed :
Sweet tomb, that in thy circuit dost contain
The perfect model of eternity :
Fair Juliet, that with angels dost remain,
Accept this latest favour at my hands ;
That living honour'd thee, and being dead,
With funeral praises do adorn thy tomb."

ROMEO AND JULIET.

It was a sorrow to me not to be present at the last rites paid to our sister. The work in London was so heavy that summer, that I could not be spared from my post, but Lady Gaveston wrote to me, "feeling sure," she said, "how interested I should be to hear of the last ceremony paid to one who was dear to all who knew her. The Bishop of M——," she continued, "officiated. It was the first time that I had ever been present at the solemn, impressive service for the burial of

the dead, and performed as it was by him, it made an impression not likely ever to be effaced. He preached a most beautiful sermon, taking for his text, ‘Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.’ He was so eloquent—so earnest—that one almost felt the visible presence of that everlasting happiness to which *she* has attained, and which, he told us, lay within the reach of all. He told us of her life ever since he had known her—her gentle piety—her noble efforts for the welfare of others; and of her works as a Sister of Mercy—an appellation which she truly deserved. Grand and noble as the life undoubtedly is, we wept to think of the terrible hardships she must have undergone—she, so tenderly nurtured, so delicate!

“The Bishop refrained from anything approaching an exhortation to his hearers, evidently thinking that the recital of her piety and of her life was the sublimest one he could offer.

“But which of us can attain to such? Verily she had come through the fire purified.

“I believe that she had a great sorrow in a most unfortunate attachment which she had formed for Mr. Vandeleur, but the last years

of her life prove how nobly she struggled against the master passion of her soul. I have no right to surmise even thus much, and I only now mention this, because my mad words, when he came into *her* room, may have led you far beyond the truth. I have always felt—and always shall feel—that, but for him, she would have been my own dear sister, in reality as well as in the union of hearts; though with the Bishop's words still vibrating in my ears, I feel that I ought to be better pleased as it is. Yet who can regard so sweet a flower nipped in the bud while there was every promise of a lovely bloom, and not weep over so untimely a fate?

“ All the people for miles around attended her funeral, and it was touching to see that the first earthly thing that fell on her coffin were flowers from children's hands. Truly it was a loving tribute from those to whom she was ever tender.

“ Mrs. Maitland and her daughter were also present, as well as my father, my husband, and my brother. Two old friends of hers begged to be allowed to come—Mr. Challenor and Captain Lovell—both of whom loved her dearly in their several ways. I wonder if she

ever knew that Mr. Vandeleur lost his wife very shortly after the birth of his son ?”

“ Captain Lovell,” thought I, as I came on his name. “ Of course, it was he in whose arms she died.”

I, too, asked myself whether she had known of Mrs. Vandeleur’s death. I could not tell.

A day or two after the funeral, I had a letter from Mr. Thompson, telling me that Mrs. Greville had bequeathed to me her Welsh property, with many kind and affectionate words which I do not care to repeat ; but I was deeply touched by this proof of her affection, for I knew that the one thing in the world which she valued was her old home.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Gaunt. O, but they say, the tongues of dying men
Enforce attention, like deep harmony ;
Where words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain ;
For they breathe truth, that breathe their words in pain.
He, that no more must say, is listen'd more

Than they whom youth and ease have taught to glose ;
More are men's ends mark'd, than their lives before ;
The setting sun, and music at the close,
As the last taste of sweets, is sweetest last ;
Writ in remembrance, more than things long past :
Though Richard my life's counsel would not hear,
My death's sad tale may yet undeaf his ear."

RICHARD II.

YEARS elapsed—our own work progressed hopefully, but I knew little of what went on in the fashionable world, except what I learnt from Lady Gaveston, between whom and myself existed a very cordial friendship.

Our different modes of life rendered much intercourse impossible, but I heard from her occasionally, and always saw her, at all events once in the year.

From her I learnt of Edith Maitland's marriage to Lord Lorton, about a year after Sister Teresa's death. It appeared that after Mrs. Greville had entered the Sisterhood, he had often gone to the Bishop of M.'s, where he took much pleasure in hearing of her life at Crewkerne, a subject on which Edith loved to talk, and so it came to pass that after she was laid in her grave, they found mutual comfort in consoling each other, and when he asked her to be his wife, she did not say him nay. If not the clever, brilliant, beautiful woman he had once hoped to call his own, she makes him a very loving, sweet wife, and never gives him reason to repent his choice, and far from resenting his keeping among his treasures a certain golden curl, she asked him to have a cabinet made, wherein to put the green velvet cushion and glass shade where the whole of the beautiful *chevelure* which she had cut off, was safely guarded; and in years to come, when her own little Eveline could understand, she would tell her of her beautiful dead cousin, to whom the ringlets belonged—the cousin who was an angel in heaven.

I heard nothing of Captain Lovell for a long time. He seemed to have passed out of sight of all his own friends, and his old haunts

knew him no more. I was grieved to find that Lady Gaveston could tell me nothing of one in whom I took so great an interest, and I often wondered what had become of him. One day, however, I saw in one of the Church Magazines, that the Reverend Francis Lovell had been appointed a missionary to some far distant land. I felt sure that it was the same man, and I wrote to him. It was many months before I received an answer, but my surmise was correct. He had taken orders, and I hear from others that he is still labouring hard in the good cause. I often hear from him. He has not forgotten his only love, and he tells me that he sees her in his dreams, beckoning him onwards. He is no mawkish dreamer, however—but a stalwart soldier-priest, working bravely and happily, taking intense interest in his work, none the less that his heart sometimes cries out for the

“Touch of a vanish’d hand,
And O, for the sound of a voice that is still,”

and if somewhat is done for *her* sake, let us not inquire too closely into human motives.

Mr. Vandeleur leads much the same life, but has grown captious and irritable ; my informant, however, is Lady Gaveston, who

frankly says that "she cannot attain to a Christian frame of mind in that quarter—that they do not speak—and that when they meet a bow only passes between them, and that she simply does not cut him lest it should cause one word to be said about her whom he killed."

Let us hope, therefore, that she may misjudge him, and that in time to come he will fulfil the prayers of the woman whose ill-fated friendship, pure in the beginning, ended in a love so intense that he was not only "all her heart beat for, but broke for."

Sad as was the ending, ten thousand times more sad was the beginning, and had he, like Launcelot, been "falsely true," I tremble to think what would have been the fate of the gentle sister who, through the heaviest sorrow that can befall a woman, went into the furnace, and came out adorned with white robes, and wearing a crown set with pearls of great price. Was it not better thus?—Was it not worth all her sorrow that she might sing with the poet,

" He lifts me to the golden doors ;
The flashes come and go ;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
And strews her lights below,
And deepens on and up ! the gates
Roll back, and far within

For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
To make me pure of sin?"

Of Lady Gaveston what need to say one word? A sweet, gentle mother, a devoted wife, a staunch friend, she was verily an ornament to the world. I am a very old woman now, and she is not a young one, and has many calls upon her time, for she is now Lady Pierrepont, and the mother of a grown-up family, but she always contrives to find time to write to me, and pay me an annual visit, and on one occasion she brought *her* Eveline with her—so like *my* Eveline that I could have fancied that she lived again on earth.

Her mother has guarded her with even more care than her other children, and watched with happiness a growing love between her and the young Earl of —, a marriage which promises all the blessings that life can bestow.

* * * * *

Will the gentle reader forgive me if I say one word about myself—not in the supposition that I personally can excite any interest, but simply to show how I became possessed of the knowledge that has enabled me to compile the foregoing "ower true tale?"

Some years after our sister's death, my brother, who was in India, wrote to tell me,

not only that he was a widower, but that he was sending home under the charge of a friend, five young children whom he entrusted to my care.

I had no option of refusing, for they were already on their way home, and in a few weeks they duly made their appearance. The charge was very great, and dismayed me considerably, and I may safely say that my feelings were very much those of a barndoor fowl who has unexpectedly hatched a brood of ducklings. To keep the young things in our close street and confined Home, was out of the question. I did not like the idea of schools for such young creatures, so I decided on sending them down to Llanfenydd and engaging a suitable person to look after them. Either I was unfortunate in my choice, or else the responsibility was too great, but matters went on very badly. One child ran away—not very far, poor little mortal, and was captured very hungry and exhausted—the others, less brave, had succumbed to the severity which I was told was absolutely necessary for their discipline.

I did not argue the point, but sought another lady for my children. This one erred on the side of lenity ; and on going down one

day, I found that the unruly little folk had turned the tables, and were avenging themselves for the severities they had endured under a previous government, on the present milder form. Indeed I may say that there was no form at all, and that a state of fierce republicanism existed instead. The powers in authority had been dethroned and turned into slaves, and anarchy reigned supreme.

There seemed but one course open to me, namely, that of taking charge of the little rebels myself. I knew that another could equally well fill the place that for twenty years I had occupied in the Home, but there was none other to take the place of a mother to these orphaned children. It was a great sacrifice, for my heart was in my work, and I was much attached to all the gentle sisters under my rule, who for many years had cordially worked with me. However, there was no option in the matter, and I entered on my new duties and my new home.

It was many years after I had been there, that, on having something done to the wall in my bedroom—the same that had formerly been Mrs. Greville's—a door was discovered, locked and entirely papered over like the rest of the wall, and completely defying detection.

Curious to see what was concealed by a door so carefully sealed up, I had it forced, and discovered a deep capacious closet which had evidently been turned into a muniment room. Tin cases, also locked, were neatly arranged on shelves, and variously labelled and dated. One was marked "Aunt Mary," with the dates from 17— to 18—, another was labelled "My Dearest Mother;" the remainder were marked "E. G.," and also dated. On opening one of these, I found letters, diaries, note-books, all sorts of manuscripts carefully arranged according to date and people. Scrupulous at reading such private memoranda, I searched for some document to guide me as to their disposal, but finding none, wrote to Mrs. Greville's lawyer to learn whether any directions had been left with him. He was as much in the dark as myself, and on seeing the careful methodical arrangement of all the manuscripts, and finding that the latest entry in the diary—comparing it with my own note-book—must have been made during her last visit here, I came to the conclusion that as she had told me her sad history and had left this place to me, she intended that if any chance should discover these papers to me, I was to read them.

Using my own judgment, I did so ; and in the letters that I discovered, I found for her a thousand excuses which she had never made for herself:—in her diaries and in copies of some of her own letters, I could plainly trace the noble, earnest struggles she had made against a feeling when once its nature had dawned upon her. My heart bled as I read these entries, and anxious to learn more of one whose sorrows no less than whose zealous piety, had interested me more than any one I ever knew, I resolved to read the whole manuscripts from the earliest to the latest in regular order.

They began in Mrs. Dacres'—then Mary Greville's—girlhood. Old love-letters, tied up with ribbon of which the hue had long since faded, locks of hair carefully preserved, a wedding ring and some miniatures were all placed in order, box within box. With various interregnums, the diary continued up to her death, telling much of the sweet child, Eveline, who graced her home, and of the invalid mother who died there.

In the box next in rotation, the manuscripts were few. A letter or two signed, “your own devoted Philip Gaveston,” a lock of golden curly hair entwined with a long, ebon

braid, a glove, a few flowers, and a book of devotional thoughts completed the contents.

The next contained diaries written in a childish text-hand, each page being duly signed, Eveline Gaveston. The compositions were a strange mixture of Italian and English, and the orthography was original, but it was touching to mark the utter self-abnegation that characterised these infantile productions—the passionate love for her mother and the yearning after a greater return of it.

Later on they contained fervent, enthusiastic aspirations—ideas of a grand and noble life—wild imaginings, but always high-minded and exalted ;—effusions such as a bright, clever girl without companionship and thrown much on herself, might pour out to relieve the too full heart and brain.

A sudden change came over the spirit after her engagement to Colonel Greville, and there were deep inquiries into her own feelings which evidently did not respond to his.

During her married life, no mention of feeling or hopes of any sort occurred ; the diaries were a record of daily life, with remarks on art, literature, music (into which she evidently threw her whole soul), people, countries, politics.

There came another great change—the first years of her widowhood, the occupations of her life, which, though lonely, was not the heart-loneliness of a widow who is bereaved indeed—she mourned the death of a dear friend—of a father—a guardian—but it was not the passionate wailing of a young heart after its lost partner. Many letters were in this box, all dated and marked, from various friends, showing how, from the very first, she had prized every affectionate remembrance:—schemes for the benefit of the poor—for schools—successes and failures duly registered. Mr. Challenor's ideas were often noted as worthy remembrance, though not coincided in—in short, these diaries were a faithful transcript of her gentle, holy life, the first disturbance in which was Mr. Challenor's mad avowal, which evidently filled her with shame and sorrow—causing severe self-examination as to whether the blame might not be imputed to her.

Then came another volume of her life, when she once more entered the world, mentioning with animation the pleasure of meeting “the gray fisherman” again. His friendship, evidently, at once exercised an immense influence over her. All his letters, with some of her

own answers, were placed in order, giving a complete key to the mastery he obtained over her. His letters were clever, elegant compositions, with just so much dash of feeling in them as to make them a very fascinating and most dangerous correspondence for a young woman—a mere girl in years, and whose purity of heart never led her to dream of evil. But at last her eyes were opened, and the fearful struggles she endured in urging a complete separation—his sophistries in combating her fears—the terrible influence he had over her, were painful to read. Now alarmed, now lulled, she yielded to his persuasions and assurances. But at last, terrified at the intensity of her own feelings, she fled to Bournemouth, where her diary suddenly ceased. The hiatus, alas! was only too sadly filled by a packet of *his* letters.

After a while the diary was resumed, and it was plain to see how her heart was torn with love, terror, and remorse, which gradually yielded to demoralization. Her lover's tenderness had dried her tears of shame, and happiness only remained. This sounds very sad and shocking, but is it not a miserable truth? Who *could* continue in sin, if the first agony it causes were to endure?

Conscience, like a razor, is keen to cut, but easy to blunt. It made my heart weep tears of blood for my poor Teresa—for by that name I always remember her—to mark the veil that darkened the once sunny, pure-hearted nature that was doing such battle with itself—that sought to reconcile her love by philosophic readings—by casting aside her early belief—by discarding holy precepts—everything but her love. It was the most painful picture of a human fall that I ever met with.

Her diaries were occasionally interspersed with clever, amusing sketches of society, witty but never ill-natured ; but from the first mention of Vandeleur's name, her love was like the one great artery of life which gave existence, colour, spirit, hope, wishes, to everything else. The passionate energy that had laid dormant so long was aroused with a fearful violence. She simply lived for her lover. It was something superhuman, her love for him. Much as I have seen of that master-passion, which for good or evil awakes in almost every human heart, to be “a blessing or a bale—a joy that opens heaven—or an anguish that leads down to hell,” never have

I seen, heard, or read of such intensity of love as these pages showed.

After a time, her reflections were all more or less tinged with sorrow and fear—an awful fear to which no name was given. Her light was waning, but she would not—dared not—see it. The fault must be with *her*, not with *him*—the beloved. She shut her eyes to the cloud that, at first “no larger than a man’s hand,” grew heavier, denser, blacker—till the appalling storm broke over her. Her anguish was something too piteous to read. She had lost *everything*. Her storm-tossed spirit could find no haven for the wrecked and sinking ship—“the magnet of her course” was gone. “The mortal coldness of the soul, like death itself,” came down upon her, and she listed not whitherdrove her bark that—withshivered sails and broken rudder—had become a prey to the pitiless waves of life that toyed with the wreck ere casting it on the desolate shore. But a kinder current caught it and carried it into a sure harbour, where spars and compass were repaired; and the bark, stronger and more beautiful in its reparation than in its first launching, once more bravely put to sea and reached the blessed haven, with the celestial flag of immortality waving at the peak.

Why she left all these papers so carefully arranged—so carefully stored away—is a mystery. Whether she had any thought of returning to her old home, or whether they were left for my perusal, must for ever remain unknown ; but after reading them, I thought it might be that the recital of her blighted life—though crowned at last, but through much suffering—might serve as a warning beacon to others (and my note-book, alas ! furnishes many a sad proof that such beacons are not unnecessary) not to attempt the perils of a platonic love when both are young and one is beautiful—and to keep from that deadly mælstrom, from which the victims are cast, maimed and shattered, or drawn down for ever into its implacable depths.

In this hope I have woven the materials with such imperfect thread as I could command, and leave it to a kind public to judge the first effort of an unskilful weaver, with a respectful hope that—as it is a first fault—the verdict may be tempered with mercy.

THE END.



Oliver Alice Charlotte
Benn

For your mother's sake
I have written this book for you
I hope it will be of some
use to you - The book is
not finished

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